The Sacrifice of Praise

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The sacrifice of praise : meditations before and after receiving access to the table of the Lord

The Sacrifice of Praise.

DR. H. BAVINCK.

The Sacrifice of Praise

Meditations before and after receiving access to the table of the Lord.

Translated from the Holland language by
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TRANSLATED BY PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR.

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Preface.

The favorable reception of these meditations by the reading public of the Netherlands was phenomenal; within four weeks the first edition was sold, and since then four others have appeared. The fifth edition, revised and increased by one chapter, is the one we offer in the English language. These meditations, before and after receiving access to the table of our Lord, derive their name from Hebrews 13:15, where the Apostle speaketh to his fellow Christians: "By him therefore let us offer *the sacrifice of praise* to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

For the benefit of those who do not know, we wish to say that PROF. DR. H. BAVINCK, of the Free University of Amsterdam, was born on the 13th of December, 1854, at Hoogeveen; graduated at Leiden on the 3d of April, 1878, and at Kampen on the 20th of July, 1880, receiving his degree D.D., at Leiden on the 10th of June, 1880. Received and accepted a call as pastor of the then Christian Reformed Church at Franeker, which he served from March 13, 1881-Oct. 8, 1882, when he accepted the appointment as Professor of Theology in the Theological School at Kampen, where he began his labors on January 10, 1883. On the 17th of December,

1902, he delivered his inaugural address as Professor of Theology in the Free University of Amsterdam.

In our translating we have attempted, as near as possible, to retain the original, sometimes sacrificing the smoothness of language and style for the sake of the distinctive original expression. We have but one desire, hope and prayer, and that is, that these meditations may be as helpful and instructive to those who read them in the English language as they have been to us in the language of our fathers.

THE TRANSLATOR.

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The Sacrifice of Praise.

CHAPTER I.

The Basis or Foundation of Confession.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.
Genesis 17:7.

The covenant of grace lies immovably firm and fast in God's eternal mercies.

In the first covenant which was established prior to the fall, God came to man demanding and requiring obedience, and promised him eternal life and heavenly salvation only after perfect fulfilment of the law. This first covenant therefore reckoned with the *will* and with the *work* of man, it rested for a part in his hand and hence was uncertain and breakable.

But the covenant of grace, which was announced for the first time in the maternal promise, has its basis and security only in the divine counsel of grace. Altho the word covenant does not appear in this promise, still the matter represented by this word is fully contained in it. For, before man thru transgression has made a covenant of friendship with Satan, God intervenes, puts enmity in the room of the effected friendship and in the seed of the woman once more brings man over to his side. The covenant of grace therefore has proceeded

entirely from God, He himself brings it about; therefore it does not rest in man nor is it in any way dependent upon his will and work. It is eternal, unchangeable, immovable, even as God himself. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

In this covenant, God is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega. In the most beautiful way it maintains the absolute sovereignty of God in the whole work of salvation. For from the very beginning to the very end nothing of man is added or introduced. Redemption is specifically a divine work, the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All boasting is excluded, the honor and glory is entirely and only due unto God, who is not only the Creator but also the Recreator of all things.

On this account is it a covenant of grace, of pure grace. In the divine virtue of grace this covenant has its origin; in the gifts of grace it finds its contents; and in the glorification of grace lies its end and purpose.

It is God, who hath established this well ordered and eternal covenant; who hath accepted into it man, separated from Him thru sin; who makes man a participant of all the profits and benefits of this covenant; who makes man to walk in the ways of this covenant and thru this covenant leadeth him to the heavenly glory.

The surety of this covenant is the reason why in Holy writ it is not a few times revealed unto us as a will or testament. It is not a mutual contract; it is not like unto an agreement between two persons brought about by them upon mutual consent, after much weighing and consideration. But the covenant of grace is an institu-

tion, a gracious disposition of God, a gift in Christ. As the Father hath appointed the Kingdom unto me, even so I appoint it unto you.

As by will or testament, in the way of a last free disposition, in the form of an inheritance the divine blessings of this covenant come unto us, without our will. It is the most precious gift, the most perfect gift which comes to us from above, descending from the Father of Lights, with whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning.

And behold now, what and what kind of blessings form and constitute the contents of this free and eternal covenant. Together they form a fullness of spiritual and material, of heavenly and earthly, of eternal and temporal blessings. In that covenant there is opened and unlocked for man a fullness of salvation; a fountain of blessedness; a spring of life. The one grace maketh room for another and that one is again in turn relieved and substituted by another. Indeed, out of the fullness of Christ we receive grace for grace.

Spiritual profits and benefits are the first things of which man becomes a recipient in this covenant. For before and above all things Christ came upon earth to seek and to save that which was lost. He did not appear as a reformer of society, as a political leader of the people, as an artist or philosopher. But a Saviour—that was His *name* and also His *office*. For that, the Father had annointed Him with His Spirit, to preach good tidings unto the meek; to bind up the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Spiritual blessings, therefore, above all, are granted unto the church by the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

in heaven. In communion with Christ, forgiveness of sins and regeneration, faith and conversion, sanctification and perseverance become the part and portion of believers. Both their consciousness and their being, their state and attitude are renewed by the Spirit of Christ. They have become different people thru the spirit that dwelleth in them; they are not from below but from above; they have been born of God, accepted by Him as children and are destined for the heavenly inheritance. For them, old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.

But these spiritual and eternal blessings are also accompanied by those which are earthly and temporal. Heaven and earth, spirit and matter, soul and body are certainly too closely allied than that an absolute separation could be possible. In the glorious picture of the future revealed by the prophecies of the Old Testament we do not only see that Israel shall be an holy nation, that the Lord betrotheth Himself in eternity, and that He shall cleanse from all uncleanliness and grant a new heart, but we also see in that picture, that under the Prince of Peace out of the House of David, Israel shall live in peace and enjoy a prosperity beyond recollection, and an extraordinary fruitfulness of her acres.

And thus also the New Testament unites the corporal blessings with the spiritual. Certainly the emphasis falls upon the latter. *First*, the Kingdom of God with His righteousness must be sought, and that Kingdom, already here upon earth, becomes the part and portion of those who believe the gospel of Christ and turn unto God with a true and contrite heart. For that Kingdom is, in the first place, established within the heart and consists not in food and drink but in righteousness, and joy, and peace thru the Holy Spirit.

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But he who has sought and found that Kingdom as a pearl of great price, receiveth thereafter also all other things. Such a one need no longer take thought of the morrow, as the Gentiles do, and anxiously ask: What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for his heavenly Father knoweth that he hath need of all these things. He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for the guilty, shall also with Him grant us all things. The hairs of our head are all told. Our bread is certain and our water sure. To be sure, he that desires to follow Jesus must forsake all. But even now, in this life, he again receiveth fathers and mothers, brethren and sisters, friends and acres, and in the coming day even life forevermore. Godliness with contentment is therefore a great gain; it is useful unto all things, having the promise of both this and the future life.

All these gifts, profits and benefits of the covenant of grace are united in the *one* great promise, that God will be our God and the God of our seed. The proclamation of salvation begins with this promise when God, after the fall of man, again seeks him, breaks the contracted friendship with Satan setting enmity in its place, and again receives man into His communion and fellowship. This promise stands at the head of the covenant which was established with Abraham, shines above the law given unto Israel, and forms the chief contents of the dispensation of the covenant of grace in the days of the Old Testament. In that promise the pious find, even in the midst of need and want, distress and misery, their salvation and comfort; besides God they have no one in heaven and none upon earth that they desire but Him. He is the strength of their heart and their portion forever. When Israel forsakes Him, then this re-

mains their comfort, that God nevertheless remains their God, again gathereth them out of the dispersion and at the end of days establisheth with them a new covenant wherein they shall be unto Him a people and He unto them a God.

And this promise passes on into the New Testament. It is fulfilled in Christ, who, in the most fearful trials, in the severest temptations, in the struggle of Gethsemane and in the suffering on the cross, remained standing because God was His God and He God's own well beloved Son. It is being fulfilled in the church, which has come in the room of Israel, and glorying in the Immanuel, God with us, is accepted as His people. And it shall be fully realized, when the New Jerusalem shall descend from God out of Heaven, when His tabernacle shall be with men, and He dwell with them as His people.

What gift is and can be greater than that of God Himself? What can He give more than Himself; Himself with all His virtues and perfections, with His grace and wisdom, with His right and power, with His unchangeableness and faith? For, where God is for us, who dare, who can, who shall be against us? What then can come unto, what then can hinder us? He *is* and He remains ours, in necessity and death, in living and dying, for time and eternity. He is, is He not, a God, not of the dead but of the living? Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord!

Moreover this promise becomes still richer when we remember, that God binds Himself therein, not only that He will be *our* God but also the God of *our seed*. Great would it be already; if God had granted His communion and fellowship unto a few people standing in no relation whatsoever to each other; if God working arbitrarily

and reckoning not with generations, had made His elect loose from all historical connection with flesh and with blood. But the Lord does not work arbitrarily and in this way. He establishes His covenant organically with man, in Christ as Head, first with Adam and then with Abraham, who is a father of all believers. With His grace God follows the line of generations. In the recreation He follows and joins Himself to the creation. He executes the election in the way of the covenant. As Father of all mercies He walks in the path which, as the Father of all things He hath assigned. Therefore the covenant of grace is also eternal in this sense, that in history it proceeds from generation to generation and is never interrupted. Grace is a stream, which, taking a beginning after the fall, in the history of mankind wears itself a bed and only finds its mouth in eternity. As covenant it may run thru different dispensations and appear in several forms, but nevertheless, thru the almighty power of God it has become an inexterminable part of the world and an indestructible good for mankind.

Just because it is a covenant it bears this incorruptible character. As we know, in all covenants there are two parts. First, God therein gives Himself unto us; but then we are thereby also admonished of God and obliged unto a new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature and walk in a new and holy life. When God gives Himself unto us, then He wills, that we thereafter shall also give ourselves unto Him, ourselves entirely, undivided, unconditionally, ourselves with our souls and our bodies, with our strength and talents, with our money and

possessions, with our children and grandchildren. Also and above all with our children, who are legacies of the Lord, and the choicest of His earthly blessings. They must be God's, because we are His.

But nevertheless, when God in that covenant also with our children requires and demands us for His service, then He remains the First, who, and unto us and unto our children glorifies the richness of His grace. He is the First, when He calls Adam and Noah, Abraham and Israel unto His communion and fellowship but He also remains this, when with them He also accepts their children into His covenant. I will be a God unto thee and unto thy seed after thee. Thus is the promise with which God binds Himself unto the elect in their generations. And before our children were born, before they had done either good or evil; He it is, that said in His free almighty power: I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Our children do not come into that covenant because we give, because we consecrate them unto the Lord. Much less do they come into it, because they have or possess any merit or virtue of their own, making them worthy of acceptance. But they are in that covenant by virtue of the promise of God, they are born in it and are therefore in it from the very first beginning of their existence, not of nature, but of grace, because God hath bound Himself to be the God of believers and of their seed.

In the spiritual world, governeth the same law as in the natural. We are all participants of a natural life, which we have received thru our parents from God, the Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth. That we possess that life is not a matter of fact. We have not

given it unto ourselves, we have not merited it, we have by our guilt even forfeited it; it is in an absolute sense a gift, to be sure, not of God's particular but of God's general grace. We become recipients of it by conception and birth, in which we are entirely passive. Without our consciousness and will we are placed in a world, which is filled with rich gifts, and we go in unto the mighty inheritance of our ancestors and forefathers; we stand upon their shoulders and enjoy of that which they wrought and brought together in the sweat of their brow.

All this is true of, and in a still stronger way applicable unto, the spiritual gifts of the covenant. For instance it is not true, that we first for awhile wander about outside of and without the covenant and thereafter by faith and conversion as by deeds of our own free will come into that covenant, nay indeed, faith and conversion are not conditions without and unto the covenant of grace, but they are profits and benefits in that covenant, revealing participation in and communion and fellowship with Christ and opening the access unto the enjoyment of His merits.

All these gifts, viz., of forgiveness and renewing, holiness and gloriousness come unto us thru the Mediator, who hath earned and merited them with the price of His blood. They can only be our part and portion then, when we are participants of Christ's person. The mystical union with Christ precedes all merits and benefits and reveals itself first in faith and conversion. Even as natural life is granted unto us in birth and thereafter reveals itself in deeds of mind and will, even so spiritual life becomes our possession thru regeneration or the new birth, thereafter to bear fruits of faith and conversion.

And again, it is only possible to be a participant in

Christ then, when the Father grants or gives us that Christ. The offering and the gift of Christ precedes all His benefits and profits. It is God, who grants us Christ, yea who gives Himself unto us in Christ and who in communion and fellowship with Him makes us recipients of all the successive gifts of the covenant, yea, of complete salvation.

And now of this unspeakable gift of God's grace, baptism is a sign and seal. For everyone, who is in truth baptised, is as surely washed with Christ's blood and spirit of the uncleanness of the soul, that is from all his sins, as he is externally washed with water which is used to remove the uncleanness of the body. Baptism is, is it not, a baptism in the name of the Triune God? For when we are baptised in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us as His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil, or turn it to our profit.

And when we are baptised in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins and accounted righteous before God.

In like manner, when we are baptised in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this Holy Sacrament, that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

Baptism is therefore unto us a sign, a witness, that

God, unto all eternity, will be our God, being unto us a gracious and merciful Father. For He hath commanded us to baptise all of those, who are His, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

In baptism God gives us the visible sign and seal that in Christ He hath given Himself unto us and hath accepted and adopted us as His children.

And that acceptance, that adoption is the basis or foundation of our confession.

CHAPTER II.

The Training or Bringing Up Unto Confession.

Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceedeth out
of the mouth of God. Matt. 4:4.

In the way of the covenant of grace God trains or brings up all His children unto liberty and independence.

While election only includes who shall infallibly inherit eternal salvation, the covenant of grace describes the way in which these elect are and shall be led to this, their destiny. Election and covenant are therefore not distinguished as a narrower and a wider circle, for they both consist of and include the same persons; but while in election they are considered by themselves, in the covenant they are always considered as standing in relation to the whole human race.

Altho the covenant of grace, thus, in the most beautiful way maintains the absolute sovereignty of God in the whole work of salvation and prohibits anything of man being added to or introduced into it, it nevertheless also, at the same time, does full justice to man's rational and moral nature and to the fact that he was created in the image of God. When God obtains His right, man also receives the place and the honor which belongs to him according to the will of God. God chooses those

who are His in Christ, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

To be sure, Christ appears in the covenant of grace as head of the church, but He does not efface His believers neither does he force them from their place. From the beginning to the end Christ is surety for them, but, in such a way that they themselves, also taught and enabled by His spirit, consciously and willingly begin to live and walk in the covenant. True, the covenant of grace is established with Christ but thru and over Him it propagates itself unto all those who are His and adopts them wholly and entirely, with body and soul, with mind and will and all strength.

Because God works in them both to will and to do His good pleasure, He urges and compels them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Thru the grace of God they are what they are; they are enabled to do all things thru Christ who strengtheneth them. Because Christ lives in them, they themselves live by the faith of the Son of God. Now, therefore, because the children of believers are accepted into this covenant of grace even before their consciousness and will, therefore we say, the calling particularly and specifically comes to the parents that they shall help and cause them to be instructed in the aforesaid doctrine and shall bring and have them brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Because in all covenants there are two parts, therefore the covenant of grace also admonishes and obliges us unto a new obedience. When God says unto us: I am your God; He also immediately adds to it: Walk before my countenance and be ye upright. Giving Himself unto us, He also wills that we shall give ourselves unto Him with all we are and with all we have.

Children, however, are not able immediately to confess for themselves and to walk in that confession. The parents are responsible for them. They are they who appear as witnesses at the baptism of their children and as sureties answer for their Christian training. Upon the basis or foundation of the acceptance or adoption from God's side the parents are obliged to bring and lead their children to the full conscious, free and willing confession of faith.

Here also, natural things are symbols of things spiritual. The natural life, which becomes our part and portion thru conception and birth out of our parents, is in an absolute sense a gift, unmerited and even beforehand forfeited. But that life, even from the very first beginning of its existence has need of all manner of sustenance and protection. It must be nursed and fostered, guarded and protected, fed and refreshed. Without feeding, without strengthening in the widest sense of the word, it would soon succumb and perish.

The first and highest cause of this preservation is God. He is not only the Creator but also the Preserver of all things. If *He* did not sustain that life, called into existence by Himself, from moment to moment with His almighty and everywhere present power it would immediately sink back into non-existence. And now if it pleased the Almighty, He could bring about this sustenance and preservation of life without using any mediums whatsoever, even as He sustained and preserved a Moses for forty days on the mountain and Jesus for forty days in the wilderness. Or He could bring it about in an extraordinary manner, even as He made the ravens to feed His servant Elijah at the brook Cherith, or as He fed the children of Israel for forty years in the wilderness with bread from Heaven.

But the common and general rule is, that God brings about this preservation in a mediate way. He uses food and drink to feed us, and He makes use of the parents as the natural guardians to provide for the manifold and various necessities of the child. The parents are obliged to collect, to lay up treasures for the children. And of those treasures the children live. They have not merited them, they can lay no claim to them, they are pure dependency and live by grace.

But even then, it is not really the bread that feeds us, but the word, which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. By bread alone, with nothing more, man shall not live, but by the word, the command, the power, the blessing laid therein and communicated there thru by God. That and that only feeds us, which it pleases God to provide with strength.

And now what feeding is for the natural life in the natural world, that is training or bringing up for the spiritual life in the spiritual world. It would not be a too wondrous or a too marvelous thing for God to preserve and build up man in his whole spiritual life without any mediums whatsoever. But it pleases Him to have men brought up and trained by man and especially to allow them to labor with the word unto the forming and upbuilding of the spirit. Mind and heart, conscience and will, disposition and imagination are in this way, from infancy formed in man thru the influence of others. And also in the feeding and preservation of the spiritual life, brought into existence by regeneration. God works in no other way or manner.

Parents are in the first place, as instruments in the hand of God, employed to nourish and foster the spiritual life in their children and bring it to maturity. Nature itself already indicates this, for it is in the circle of

the family that the children receive their existence and spend the first years of their life. And God in His revelation is in conformity with this His teaching in nature. In Israel the Lord inculcated in the parents the duty, that they should declare unto their children and their children's children the great works that God had done in their midst; that they should give them an explanation of the solemn ceremonies in their service, especially those of the Passover; and that they should instruct them in the laws, in the statutes and judgments which God had given unto His people. Even as the Lord Himself was the Father and Provider of His people, so the parents must be the corporeal and spiritual guardians of their children.

Still stronger is this duty bound unto the hearts of the parents in the days of the New Testament. Jesus calls the children unto Him, by name, blesses them and promises them the Kingdom of Heaven. Not less than the parents, the children participate in the blessing of Christ. The Apostles therefore considered them, even as the adults, accepted into the communion of Christ and exhort them to be obedient unto their parents *in the Lord;* and upon the parents they lay the duty not to provoke their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

When Christianity entered the world, it again restored and sanctified the broken bands of family life; it restored the husband to the wife, the mother to the children, the children again to the parents. And under the impression of that moral change a Church Father wrote that beautiful word: "The mother is the glory of the children, the wife the glory of the husband and both are the glory of the wife."

In this weighty and responsible task of training and

bringing up, the parents are in the present day assisted by the school. Because the demands for life, both in knowledge and ability, have become so much higher and broader, the parents themselves are no longer personally able to fulfill the whole task which rests upon them in the bringing up of their children. They no longer have the time neither the ability for it. Therefore next to the family has come to stand the school; which to be sure does not relieve the parents of their responsibility and task but nevertheless comes to offer help and assistance in the keeping and fulfillment of it. The parents remain called to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; they must see to it, that the instruction given in the school is in conformity with this. But the school continues the education in this line, brings the Christian training into connection with the requirements which state and society demand of its future active members; and the purpose of the school is to mould the children into men of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The church also has a task to fulfill in this training of the children of the covenant. But her work is essentially distinguished from that of family and school. It was especially the Reformation, and among the Reformers specifically, Calvin who again laid stress and emphasis upon this ecclesiastical training of the youth. The catechetical instruction, which the church officially, in the name of the Lord, gives to her youthful, minor members, has this peculiar and specific purpose, that it leads the baptized children, in full liberty of faith to participate in the Holy Supper, and there, with the whole church, in personal independence and liberty show the death of the Lord. The instruction of the church does not include the task which awaits the

children in their civil and social life, but it enforces the relation which God has laid between the two signs and seals of his covenant, and it purposes to train and bring up the children of the covenant unto mature, conscious confessing members of the Church of Christ.

If it is thus carried out according to the rule of the word of the Lord, then family, church and school work together in a most beautiful way. They do not stand disconnected, side by side, and much less in opposition to each other; the one does not break down what the other builds up, but together they labor in the one great task, the reformation of man after the image and likeness of God. One faith and one baptism binds them together; it is one confession upon which they all rest; it is one view of world and life which they impart to the children for comfort and support in the arena of this earthly life. Each in its own way and yet in a mutual relation they warn and teach every man in all wisdom, that they may present him perfect in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER III.

The Rule of Confession.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.
Ps. 119:105.

In the training and bringing up unto confession of the name of the Lord, family and church and school must use the word of God which comes unto us in the Holy Scriptures. That word is the foundation, the principle, the rule, and again, at the same time, the purpose of all confession. We would have nothing to confess, if God did not give us in the scriptures His truth to confess. Out of the word of God the spiritual life is fed, so that, growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, it may, in an independent way, interpret and confess that word in its own language before all men.

To be sure, it is not the parent, neither the teacher, neither the minister of the word; nor is it that word in itself which gives and preserves this spiritual life. For here also, is the saying of Jesus applicable, that by bread alone, by that word with nothing more, man shall not live but by all strength and blessing which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. It is not, Paul that planteth; neither, Apollos that watereth; but, God only that giveth the increase.

But nevertheless it is that word of Holy Writ in the hand of the parents and of the teachers, with the blessing of the Lord, which serves to feed the spiritual life of the children. What food is for the physical, that is the word of God for the spiritual life. How sweet have been Thy words unto my taste! O Lord, yea, sweeter than honey and honey comb to my mouth!

That word of God comes unto us from the first moments of our existence. *That*, is not the first time that it comes unto us when the Bible lies open before us and we read and search it; neither do we come in contact with it for the first time *then*, when in the public assembly of the saints it is proclaimed unto us by a servant of the Most High and we listen to it. But that word comes unto us from our most tender infancy. It comes unto us, in the rebuking of the father, in the admonition of the mother, in the instruction of the teacher, in the fellowship of our comrades, in the witnessing of our conscience, in the experiences of life. It is *with* us upon all our paths, it accompanies us from the cradle to the grave, it never leaves us to ourselves. As a benediction it is pronounced upon our heads, in psalm and hymn it is sung unto us, in addresses it is bound unto our hearts, in commandments or prohibitions it is revealed unto our eyes. By and thru that Word we are always led and guided, admonished and comforted, encouraged and mortified, convinced of sin and referred to Christ. It is the very atmosphere in which we live and breathe from our birth, it is the food, the drink, the air, the sunshine, the rain for our spiritual life, and that all together and at once.

And always is that Word a power. Without wishing or being able to designate when it already exerts its influence upon the conscience and heart of man, it re-

mains in itself always a power of God unto salvation. Never is it a vain sound, a dead letter, a meaningless phrase. It is always quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; a hammer which breaketh in pieces the hard and stony heart of the sinner; a sword of the spirit that mortally wounds the proud and self-righteous man; a testimony and witness of God that awakeneth the conscience; a seed of regeneration, a power unto sanctification, profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works; in a word, a means of grace, preceding and highly exalted above the sacraments.

Even there, where it does not bring and command a blessing, it nevertheless does its work and exerts its influence. The devils believe and tremble. For Atheists, unbelievers, it is a saviour of death unto death. It is a stone of stumbling, a rock of offense over and against which the godless stumble and are hurt. If it does not soften, it hardens. If it does not warm, it scorches. A man coming in contact with it never remains the same; he becomes better or worse, but can never cover himself with the shield of neutrality. Even as the rain and the snow cometh down from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

The cause of this power lies therein, that it is *God's*

Word. All scripture was not only once given by inspiration of God but it is also as such continually preserved by God with His Almighty and everywhere present power. The Gospel, which comes forth out of that Word unto man in manifold forms and along various ways, is always borne and animated by God. It *is* and always remains His Word. It is constantly accompanied by the Holy Spirit, who lives and dwells in the church and from out of her goes into the world and convinces her of sin, righteousness and judgment. It is a Word, that continually proceeds out of the mouth of God, that comes unto us in Christ, and that thru the Spirit of Christ is declared unto our heart or conscience.

Therefore, that Word *can* be and indeed *is* the meat and drink of our spiritual lives. It is the medium, not the fountain of grace. God is and remains the giver and dispenser of all grace; no man, no priest, no word, no sacrament has been clothed by Him with the treasure of grace or commissioned to dispense her. Servants can give the sign and seal, but God only grants the sealed and signified fact. This only has God done—and this also is grace—He has in His free power and pleasure bound Himself under oath to grant with His word, which is administered in full accord with the meaning of the Spirit, unto each and everyone, who believingly accepts it, Christ, who is the meat and drink of our souls, the bread that has come down from Heaven, the water of life, drinking of which we shall never again thirst.

But to be thus, that Word must be believed with a child-like faith and accepted in humility. Even as bread, however powerful and nourishing it may be, can only be profitable for the preservation of our natural lives then, when it is eaten with the mouth and accepted

into the body—even so can the Word of God be food for our souls only then, when it is accepted by faith and is implanted in our hearts.

Therefore hath the Lord also destined them the one for the other. He, who created the food, also created the mouth to eat it. He, who gave the Word, also brought to light thru regeneration that new life which can only be fed and strengthened by the food of that Word.

They are related and by origin stand in a close relation to each other. The Word works and strengthens the spiritual life. And the spiritual life, by virtue of its nature, is naturally drawn toward and longs for this food, even, as an infant for its mother's breast, as the hungry for bread and the thirsty for water.

Furthermore they are both descended from one Spirit. In the sphere of natural things there is a possibility of knowledge only because the *reason* in us and the *thoughts* in the creation, together and in their mutual relation, have been made by that Word which in the beginning was with God, which was God, and by which all things have been made. It is one and the same light that enlightens both the eye and the objects. One and the same light of knowledge shines in the human reason and in the works of God's hand. And then only, does man see and know, when both of these streams of light, coming from one fountain, meet each other. With Thee, O Lord, is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light!

Thus, also the *spiritual man* and the *Word of the Spirit* belong together. It is the same Spirit, the Spirit of Christ namely, who brought the Word into existence and preserves it in existence, and who made the spiritual man to be born in us. In Holy Writ He has, as it

were, pictured Christ unto and before our eyes; and in our heart He makes Him to live by faith. In Holy Writ He has sketched for us the image of Christ and according to that image He recreates the believer more and more. For we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Therefore it is an infallible, undeceivable mark of spiritual life, when our heart yearns after and longs for that Word. Perfectly natural and as a matter of fact the hungry longs for bread and the thirsty for water and the sick for medicine. And just as naturally, the spiritual man longingly reaches for the Word of God and for Christ who is offered unto him in that Word. He never grows beyond that Word, as the mystic dreams; he does not use that Word as a ladder to ascend to a certain height, then to spread his own wings and support himself. Nay indeed, he who does this will soon be humiliated and put to shame. He, who refuses food will soon starve. He, who has no respect for the Word of Christ does not love the Lord. He, who casts away the medicine has no need of a physician.

But the spiritual man, as long as he lives and with his whole soul, feels himself bound to that Word as the medium unto the communion and fellowship with God, because God, even God, hath bound Himself to that Word. The more he grows and the stronger he becomes, the more he becomes founded in that Word. He clings and cleaves to it even as the ivy to the wall. He leans upon it as upon the rod and staff of his pilgrimage. He becomes more and more attached to it, also more and more bound to it. His love for it becomes stronger and stronger. His estimation of its worthiness continually becomes

greater and he constantly finds new and richer treasures in it for his heart and life. More and more it becomes for him a Word of God, a word that comes unto him from the Almighty Lord, a letter from his Father sent unto him from Heaven, to be a guide upon the way to the Father's house with its many, many mansions. Thy Word is a light upon my path and a lamp for my foot. How love I Thy law, O Lord, it is my meditation all the day.

Therefore every child of the covenant, even from his sleeping infancy, must and ought to be fed by his parents with that word. We cannot, if it is done with wisdom, begin too soon. Already the respectful attitude of the older ones at the time of prayer and the reading of God's Word awakens in the heart of the child a feeling of the sacredness of this service, a feeling which very often remains with him unto the last years of his life. The short prayer, before and after each meal, and at the time of retiring and awakening, implanted in the child's heart very often leaves impressions that are not to be blotted out and even in after life make us still remember the pious years of our youth. Certainly we do not have to wait with teaching our little children religious words and prayers until they can understand the facts, as if otherwise we were only making little hypocrites of them, for we learn the facts by and thru words even as we learn words by and thru facts; the one assists the other. And in general there is a remarkable resemblance between the feeling of dependence and humility which is a child's by nature and the state or spirit in which the Lord God loves to see us and which is most pleasing unto Him. If we do not become like unto little children we shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

But then this bringing of God's Word unto the children must, at the same time, be both instruction and training, at the same time working upon mind and heart, and together influencing both knowledge and actions. We must watch against the extremes, both of orthodoxy and pietism. Religion is not only knowledge but also life; man has not only consciousness but also feeling and will. In His law God requires that we shall serve Him not with our whole mind only, but also with our whole heart, and soul, and all power shall we love Him.

Instruction therefore must take place—instruction in the doctrines of the truth, carefully and exactly, so that pure representations, clear ideas, and correct judgments may be implanted in the child, and an essential knowledge of the truth may be formed in its consciousness or mind. The cultivation of emotions and the awakening of affections without true and clear representations is even dangerous; it is detrimental to the truth, opens the door for falsehood and errors and is very often the cause of great and gross excesses.

But nevertheless clear representations and pure ideas are not sufficient. But indeed, hardly anywhere and especially in the religious sphere, it is almost an utter impossibility to obtain and possess these without being influenced in our disposition and heart. For, a right understanding and an essential knowledge is never obtained without the heart. In all learning there must of necessity be attention, interest, love; if we do not know a certain thing we do not love it, we really and in truth only know that which we love in the deepest depths of our souls.

The training, the bringing up of a child does not, therefore, follow upon instruction. We are not first to

work upon the mind and then afterwards turn to the heart. We are not to implant pure and clear ideas of the truth into the mind, hoping that they will afterwards be accepted with a true faith of the heart, then to influence the life and actions. Nay indeed, but from the very beginning, training, bringing up and instruction must go hand in hand. The instruction itself ought always to bear a training, a pedagogical character. The truth of God is of such a nature that it cannot be understood rightly without a true and upright faith of the heart. He, who impresses the truth upon his mind, without having his heart in it, receives only the image of the things, while he remains a stranger unto the things themselves.

Therefore the influencing of mind and will, the preparing to know and do, the supplying of pure, clear representations, and the awakening of affections and emotions should always go together. We may not separate the words from the facts, neither the facts from the words. For God has united these two. He binds Himself to give unto everyone, who in truth believes the Word, the thing signified thereby. He, who knows God in the face of Christ, has eternal life. When we therefore speak of God, of Christ, etc., then these names may not be mere sounds unto us, but we must think of Them who are represented thereby. Then the Gospel becomes rich; then it is not an abstract system of doctrines, but a world of invisible, eternal treasures, which are signified and sealed, indicated and granted unto us therein.

When in this way, in *home* and *school* and *catechism*, instruction and training united with truth work together, then we may expect, that, with the blessing of the Lord the spiritual life will come to development and maturity,

blooming forth into faith and conversion, and finally manifest itself externally in a confession with mouth and heart.

It always remains true however, that the increase must come from above. If the Lord does not build the house, then the laborers work thereon in vain. Parents and teachers and ministers are nothing but instruments in His hand. He is the only, true Father and Trainer of His children, who feeds and leads, preserves and protects, strengthens and perfects them. Not needing to be served by the hand of man, He Himself gives unto all, life, breath and all things. He governs and regulates the power of the Word and the working of the Spirit.

Jesus is the vine, and the believers are the branches, and the Heavenly Father is the Husbandman.

CHAPTER IV.

The Essence of Confession.

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Romans 10: 9, 10.

Everything that lives and grows has need of time. A machine can quickly, in a few moments be put together. But life and growth are not to be forced. Artificial promotion of growth produces or brings forth hot house plants which are not able to withstand storm and tempest.

Also, our spiritual life is subject to this law of development under which all organical beings have been created. Holy Writ admits of various and manifold differences amongst the children of God. It speaks of lambs and sucklings in the sheepfold of Jesus; it makes mention of children, of youths, and of Fathers in the faith; it makes a distinction between those who are still under age and those who have already attained their majority and in connection herewith also between the milk and the strong meat of the truth, which must be

administered unto the believers. Again and again we are admonished and exhorted, to grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to put on the new man created after God in true righteousness and holiness, to become strengthened in the inward man and renewed in the spirit of our minds.

Even as the natural, so also must the spritual life be developed. It may not remain hid from man, neither may it, as a treasure, be buried in the earth, nor can it be consigned to inactivity. Life is a stranger to all indolence and idleness. Life is exertion, life is power, life is action, everything that *lives*, moves and develops itself. In its growth it can be hindered and checked, but as long as *life* is there, action is inseparable from it. In a still greater measure is this true of the spiritual life, which is implanted in regeneration thru the Holy Spirit and bears an eternal, indestructable character. Wherever it is, it reveals itself, it appears in word and deed, it develops into activities of faith and conversion and where faith is present, confession is given therewith as a matter of fact.

Confession is an excellent word for a still more excellent and glorious fact. But to a great extent and in a great measure it has lost its beauty and power for our minds. When we use it or hear it used by others, we generally, immediately think of the confessional writings of this or that Christian Church, or we think of the public confession, which is made, once in their lives, by the youthful members of the church before they are permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper.

But these meanings of the word "Confession" are relative. The original meaning in Scripture is much richer and deeper. According to this original meaning, confessing is nothing else and nothing less than one's

openly and publicly testifying and witnessing of personal faith in Jesus as the Christ.

Two things are then included in this. First, a true, upright faith, a deep, firm conviction of heart. In the true sense of the word no confessing is possible, if there is no faith in the heart. Confessing is a thing of the heart. It is rooted in the heart. It comes up out of the heart. It is a fruit of the faith of the heart. Without that faith, confessing becomes a worthless work of the lips, an external repetition with the mouth, an impersonal, untrue, hypocritical work, which is not worthy of the beautiful name, confession; an act refuted and condemned by Christ with holy wrath in the Phariseism of His day. All such dissemblers are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful without, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

But in the second place there is included in the true confessing, the fact, that the faith of the heart is not ashamed of itself but reveals itself in openly and publicly testifying and witnessing. He, who does not believe, *cannot* confess. But he, who does believe in truth and uprightness, *must* confess; he cannot remain silent; he must speak to the ear of friend and enemy, before the face of God, of angels, and of men. Whatever insult, disgrace, and scorn may follow, whatever hatred, and persecution it may awaken, He, who believes, speaks: loud, powerful, free. We believe, therefore we speak.

Jeremiah by his prophesying made himself a mock and derision in the midst of his people, but nevertheless he could not keep silent. The Lord constrained him, was too strong for him and triumphed over him. Altho he said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name, the Word, which the Lord put in

his heart, became as a burning fire shut up in his bones. When the lion roars, who will not fear? When the Lord speaks, who will not prophesy?

Believing with the heart and confessing with the mouth therefore accompany each other, and belong inseparably together. He, who believes and does not confess, is just as much in contradiction with the law of God as he, who confesses and does not believe. Both are necessary, said a certain church Father, a true, firm faith and a free confession, so that the heart may be ornamented with the certainty of faith and the tongue may fearlessly confess the truth. And another hath witnessed: The heart has need of the mouth, for what fruit can it bring forth, to believe with the heart, without publicly confessing before men? The faith of the heart may justify, the perfect salvation nevertheless, lieth in confession. Then only does faith shine when it reveals itself in confessing, and then only are many benefitted and profited by it. On the other hand, the mouth has need of the heart, for many there are who confess Christ but whose hearts are far from Him.

Thus also speaks the Apostle Paul, when he says, that the faith of the heart grants righteousness but that the confession of the mouth must accompany it to obtain salvation. To be sure, it is true that these two cannot be separated in our thoughts, no more than the confession of the Lord Jesus can be separated from the faith in His resurrection. Faith and confession are as inseperably bound together as the Lordship of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead; as inseparably, as righteousness and salvation. But nevertheless, is it true—and that is what the Apostle Paul wishes to make known—that, altho the faith of the heart justifies, nevertheless this faith is first known and proves it-

self to be the true, justifying faith, when it reveals itself in confession. Faith, not confession, justifies. But that, *this* faith is the *true* faith first becomes evident in the confessing. The true, justifying faith only leads unto salvation in the way of confession. Without holiness shall no one see God. Without confession, as fruit of faith, shall no one enter Heaven. Confession is not the meriting cause but it is the royal, the kingly way unto salvation.

Faith and confession therefore also exert an influence upon each other and are a mutual prop and support. The faith that does not confess becomes shy, timid, retracts, begins to pine away, or is sometimes even discovered in its falseness and unfaithfulness. And the confession without faith is nothing more than a flower without a stem, it withers and falls to pieces. On the other hand, by and thru confessing, faith gains in strength, power, and vitality, becomes more firmly founded, and shoots its roots deeper and deeper into the ground of the heart and by and thru faith, confessing receives its animation and fire, gains in courage and freeness, and as by a secret, invisible flame it is constantly preserved and fed.

From this it then also follows, that the so-called public confession of faith is not a loose, separated fact, which takes place *once* and therewith is concluded forever. Such an interpretation is still possessed and found with many. A few weeks beforehand they prepare themselves for the solemn hour of confession. During this preparatory season they withdraw and will hold themselves from public amusements. More regularly they attend church and catechism. On the day of confession they appear in a new frock or suit. Probably after this, they *once* partake of the Lord's Supper. But then everything is forgotten. Life resumes its former

old course and proceeds as if nothing whatever had taken place.

Such confessing is not in any way worthy of the name, confession. It does not stand higher than this: A work, which was accepted, being finished, is delivered. Such a confession is nothing more than an old custom, which is kept up and followed unconsciously and thoughtlessly.

Such a work, such an action is *not*, making confession of faith. Confessing is much richer of meaning and much greater in significance. Certainly it is an earnest matter and a solemn, impressive hour when youthful members for the first time in the midst of the congregation make confession of their personal faith. It is a mile post upon the way of life, the coming to majority of the minor child, the entering in unto all the rights and privileges granted by Christ to His believers. Unto that affirmative answer, which we then give we are bound for time and eternity. God holds us firmly unto that and will one day judge us according to it. Christ keeps it in remembrance and will one day call for an account of it. The Holy Spirit will keep and preserve it in our minds and remembrance and will refer and point us to it again and again, even unto the hour of death, yea, even unto all eternity. It shall one day, in the day of days, testify for us and if not, then against us—it will fly up in our face and make our condemnation the heavier.

But this confessing of our faith is not a matter, an action, a work which stands by itself and which sustains no relation to our preceding and following life. It is not a sacrament as the church of Rome has made it. It bears in itself no special, supernatural holiness. It is not, as it were by a fence, separated from the sphere of unconsecrated life. It does not incorporate us into a

new company, into a special rank and file amongst the soldiers under Christ Jesus as King. However important and however earnest the making of public confession may be it does not stand disconnected, by itself, but is closely related to and in the closest way is connected with our preceding and following confessions.

This one public confession is preceded by a daily confession. All faith confesses, be it according to its own measure, in its own manner and in its own language. The faith of the playing child, of the happy and cheerful boy, of the lively youth also confesses—in its own way and manner. If faith is only of the true calibre, if there is only true, childlike fear of God in the heart, it always comes to light and makes its appearance. It reveals itself and we can see and behold it in the piousness of desires, in the uprightness of mind, in the tenderness of heart, in the respect for things holy and sacred, in the pleasure to pray, in the fear of what is evil and wicked, in the holding back of themselves and others from what is not right but sinful. Confessing! that is what our children do even from their infancy and their confessions are pleasing unto the ear of God.

Nevertheless, what saith the Scriptures? Let the little children come unto Me and hinder them not, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Because the name of the Lord is excellent in all the earth He ordains strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings that He may still the enemy and the avenger. The small and weak is chosen by the Lord to put to shame thereby the great and mighty. Children in their simplicity, in their uprightness, in their guilelessness and humility are proclaimers of the glory and excellency of God, which is shed abroad thruout the whole earth and which has revealed itself the brightest in Christ.

And even as the making of public confession is *preceded* by a confession from infancy, so also is and must it be *followed* by a confession thruout the whole life, even unto the hour of death.

It is true, the public confession in the midst of the congregation is, in the first place, to obtain permission unto the table of the Lord. It opens the access unto the table of the covenant. And thus it appears to separate Baptism and the Lord's Supper from each other. But in deed and in truth this is not so, it rather binds and holds them together.

And thus it also ought to be. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments of the same worth and worthiness. They have the same power and significance. They are signs and seals of the same covenant. Both of them with the Word are appointed and ordained thereto, that they direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, as to the one ground and foundation of our salvation. These two sacraments are also given and granted unto the same believers. In the New Testament baptism was mostly administered unto adults; confession therefore preceded baptism; he who was baptised had access immediately unto the Lord's table.

But when infant baptism became the general practice there naturally and gradually came a separation. To be sure, baptism can be administered unto children of the covenant for it is the sacrament of regeneration and incorporation into the Church of Christ. But the Lord's Supper supposes, that we ourselves accept the broken bread and eat, that we ourselves receive the cup and drink. The right use of the Lord's Supper ought to be and must be preceded therefore by the ability to examine and prove ourselves and discern the body of the Lord.

It is the sacrament of the increasing and upbuilding of the spiritual life in the communion and fellowship of the Lord Jesus, and is therefore also repeated from time to time.

Consequently confession gradually took in a place between baptism and communion, not to separate them but just the reverse, to hold them in their mutual relation and to lead from baptism to communion. Confession supposes baptism and prepares for communion. In confession the baptised child accepts its own baptism and desires to receive access to the second sign and seal of the covenant. Out of grace God accepted and adopted him as His child, and now he, having come to years of understanding and discretion and to consciousness of his life and duty, humbly and child-like but also believingly and sure, confesses before all men that God is His God. He puts his hand in the hand of God. Freely and with clear consciousness he admits and accepts the covenant relation in which he was accepted from his birth. Upon the affirmation of the Lord: I am your God. He now answers: And I am Thy servant, a son of thine handmaid, Thou hast loosed my bonds. God trains and brings up all of His children unto liberty and self-dependence. In the day of His power He desires a willing people. We love Him because He first loved us.

That is what the believer proclaims, when in the solemn hour of his confession, he is given access to the Supper of the Lord. Of that he also makes confession, when with the congregation he sits at the table of the Lord. In the sacrament the emphasis, in the first place, is certainly laid upon what God does, upon His gift, upon His grace. Therein, He offers unto us the Christ with all the profits and benefits merited by Him. The

Lord's Supper was specifically instituted by our Saviour Jesus Christ for the purpose of feeding and preserving those whom He had already regenerated and incorporated into His family, which is His Church. It is His flesh that we eat, and His blood that we drink with the mouth of faith, for the strengthening of our spiritual life.

But then, in the second place, the sacrament is from our side a confession of faith. The Lord's Supper is preceded by the true proving and examining of ourselves, which consists in three things.

First we are to consider by ourselves our sins and the curse due unto us for them, to the end that we may abhor and humble ourselves before God. Secondly, we are to examine our own hearts whether we do believe this faithful promise of God, that all our sins are forgiven us, only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed and freely given unto us as our own. Finally, we are to examine our own conscience whether we purpose henceforth to show true thankfulness to God in our whole life, and to walk uprightly before Him.

What a significant confession we therefore make when we come to the Lord's Supper! We do not come to it to testify that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves; but on the contrary, considering that we seek our life out of ourselves in Jesus Christ, we acknowledge that we lie in the midst of death. We confess in this sacrament that Jesus Christ is the true meat and drink of our souls, and that we are members of His body. For it is one bread, thus we, being many, are one body, for we all are partakers of one bread.

However that Supper of the Lord does not stand far without and highly axalted above our life. Certainly

it is extraordinary in this sense, that every time and anew we are met in this sacrament by God's specific grace, and it is revealed in a particular way unto our eyes and assured unto our hearts. Very often the Lord's Supper also seems strange and wondrous to us, because it is only celebrated a few times in a year and then not faithfully and not nearly by all. But the grace which is granted unto us in this sacrament is no other than that which constantly accompanies the word of the Gospel and feeds us day by day. In the first Christian congregations therefore the Lord's Supper was celebrated not only every Sabbath but also at the weekly meetings of the believers. It was the height of their service, the communion of saints, the sustenance which they received every time for their pilgrimage.

In the Lord's Supper is signified and sealed the communion and fellowship of Christ, which we, at all times, possess in the Word, and enjoy thru faith. And of that faith we not only witness and testify when we sit at the table of the covenant, neither only on Sunday, when with the congregation we go up to the house of prayer.

But, as surely as we are true believers, we make confession of that faith thruout our whole life. For *faith* cannot do otherwise, it must confess. It does not ask whether good works ought to be and must be done, but before the question can arise it has already done them. Confession with mouth and heart, with word and deed, in life and walk is inseparable from the faith of the heart. It is the fruit of the tree, the scent of the flower, the light of the sun, the sweetness of the honey. It is impossible, that anyone implanted into Christ by a true faith should not bring forth fruits of gratitude.

He who believes, confesses, not only on Sunday

but also during the week, not only in the church but also in the home and school, in shop and factory, in office and store, in civil and social life, in learning and science, amongst friends and enemies, before angels and men.

He confesses in upholding and supporting the public service of the church, in acts of Christian assistance, in the supporting of Christian instruction, in the caring for the poor, in the visiting of the bound and imprisoned, in the clothing of the naked, in the feeding of the hungry, in the comforting of the weeping, in admonishing the unruly, in exhorting the disputers and unbelievers, in giving account of the hope which is in him, in keeping himself unspotted from the world.

He who believes, confesses. His life itself becomes a confession, a living, holy, God-pleasing sacrifice in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER V.

The Contents of Confession.

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest, and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
Acts 8:37.

According to Holy Writ two things especially constitute the contents of confession.

In the first place every true confession contains an acknowledgment of our guilt and sin. In the days of the Old Testament, upon the great day of propitiation the High Priest was obliged to lay both of his hands upon the head of the living goat, confessing thereover all the unrighteousnesses of the children of Israel and all their transgressions, of whatever nature their sins might be, and therewith laying them upon the head of the goat send him away into the wilderness.

That was a common, a general confession made by the High Priest, in the name of the whole nation. But this common, general confession did not exclude the personal, individual confession of sins. For, this personal, individual confession is heard again and again in the books of the old covenant, especially in the so-called penitential psalms. It also forms an important part of

the prayers of the saints, of David and Solomon, of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel.

There is not a people or nation in the world that has felt so deeply, and has confessed so humbly the guilt of sin as the children of Israel. Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head. There is no rest in my bones because of my sin, for mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

And this confession of sins passes over into the church of the New Testament. When John the Baptist appeared with the preaching of repentance, many were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. Jesus granted unto the multitude of sufferers who came unto Him, very often not only the healing of the diseases of the body but also a still greater gift, namely, the forgiveness of their sins and deliverance of their soul. Upon the lips of His disciples He laid the prayer: Father, forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. In the parable of the Publican He shows us the spirit, in which it behoeves us to be when we come before God, the Righteous and the Holy. The publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. Certainly, if we confess our sins, God is true and faithful and righteous and will forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But however significant and important, however necessary this confession of sins is, nevertheless in itself, it is not sufficient. The truth or doctrine of our

misery does not stand by itself but it prepares the way for the truths or doctrines of deliverance and gratitude. Yea, he who truly realizes and confesses his sins and misery, is already a believer. In the Lord's days of the Heidelberg Catechism which treat on the misery of man, it is not the unbeliever but the Christian who speaks; one who in the first division has already gloried in his only comfort and confessed, that he, with body and soul, both in life and death, is no longer his own but his faithful Saviour Jesus Christ's.

The true, upright confession of guilt is already a fruit of saving faith. For he, who in truth and humility confesses his sins, has certainly already sought the Lord, has placed himself before God's countenance and finds himself in the presence of the Almighty, and this he cannot do but in the belief that the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plentious in mercy.

To be sure, there is a certain acknowledgment of sins, which is without faith. Also children of the world often come to consciousness of the great miserableness of their existence. Cain said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear," and Judas cried out, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." There is a cry of despair which is not born of a contrite heart, but which is brought forth by the fearful consequences of sin. There is a remorse and hopelessness, which does not drive one toward God but which causes a fleeing away from and a rebelling against Him. There is a sorrow of the world which worketh not a repentance to salvation not to be repented of, but which worketh death.

But the true confession of sins is entirely different than this cry of despair and bears an entirely different character. It comes up out of a contrite spirit, which

is not despised by God but pleasing unto Him. It has respect not unto the consequences but unto the essence, unto the guilt of sin, because it displeases God and is in contradiction with His law. It consists in a hearty repentance, that we have provoked God to anger with our sins, that we have sinned against His righteousness, yea more, that we have so grossly sinned against His love. For thus hath Jesus once said: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin."

This confession is accompanied with a sorrow unto God and worketh a repentance to salvation not to be repented of. It is made before God's countenance and holds nothing back or secret from Him. It is accompanied with and is born of a faith that recognizeth God not only to be righteous but also gracious and merciful. It is also, already a confession of faith; it is of and by or thru and unto faith. Faith does not first take a beginning after the knowledge of misery but precedes this and gives it its right form. Above the law shines the word of grace: "I am the Lord, your God." The true conversion is a part of thankfulness and gratitude.

Therefore Holy Writ teaches us that confession, in the second place, contains a confession of the name of the Lord. Conversion and confession of the Lord's name belong together. For confession of that name signifies the hearty, believing acknowledgement that the Lord, Jehova, is the God of the covenant, who hath revealed Himself as the faithful and merciful and who fulfils all of His promises of grace in Christ. He who repents with a true and upright heart, turns to God, the living God, who in Christ is a reconciled Father.

Therefore, John the Baptist, appearing in the days of the New Testament, calls not only to repentance and

confession of sins, but also points to the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world. He was not a preacher of the law and of penitence only, but also a herald of the gospel and a preacher of faith. The Kingdom of Heaven had come nigh, had it not? And after him came He, who was preferred before him, whose shoe latchet he was not worthy to unloose. John administered the baptism unto a sign and seal of the forgiveness of sins, which is granted and obtained in the way of repentance.

In the New Testament the whole contents of the confession of faith is constantly taken together or expressed in the few words, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He, who confesses Him as such before man, will one day be confessed by Him before His Father which is in Heaven. In an earnest, solemn moment when many of Jesus' disciples went back and no longer desired to walk with Him, He asked the twelve: "Will ye also go away?" But Simon Peter answered for them all: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." As soon as the Eunich made this good confession he was immediately baptised by Philip. By this confession, that Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh, are the spirits known. Therefore, whosoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God.

Jesus the promised Messiah, the divinely annointed Prophet and Priest and King—that is the short, the brief contents of the whole Christian faith. It is the pith of revelation, the heart of Holy Writ, the bone and marrow of all confession, the central dogma of all the truths of salvation, the centre of light from which all the

streams and rays of the knowledge of God proceed to the circumference. The Person of Christ determines the essence of Christianity.

With this confession the Church of Christ accepted its own, independent place in the midst of Jews and Gentiles. By it, she was distinguished and separated from both. From out of it, she constantly came to a richer development of her faith and life. At first everyone was baptised who made confession of the Lord Jesus. After a while this confession was increased to that of the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In the twelve articles of our Catholic, undoubted, Christian faith, this confession receives a still greater development. Finally in the different confessions of the Christian Church all of these articles have been more closely studied and better explained. The confessions are, as it were, branches and leaves proceeding from the one tree which, in the belief that Jesus is the Christ, at the beginning was planted in the ground of the church.

To be sure, we find supposed in this short, brief confession, creation and fall, sin and misery. As it were in a germ, the whole Person of Christ, with His names and natures, with His offices and states, lies comprehended in it. The whole order of salvation, for the individual, for humanity, for the world is intricately contained or included in it. In the Cross of Christ which is an offense unto the Jews and foolishness unto the Greeks; sin and grace, law and gospel, justice and mercy, guilt and forgiveness are united and reconciled. At that Cross, God and the world, Heaven and earth, angels and men, peoples and nations extend to one another the hand of peace. For by the Cross of Christ, God hath reconciled the world unto Himself—not im-

puting her trespasses unto her, and, triumphed over all authority and powers.

In the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we participate in the love of the Father and enjoy the communion of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER VI.

The Diversity of Confession.

We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.
Acts 2:11.

In the first days, the short, brief confession, that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God, was sufficient for the church.

But this time of simple, child-like faith did not and could not continue long. The opposition from without as well as the awakening of thought within her own circle compelled the church to give more and more a clearer and plainer account of the contents of her faith.

And from that moment all manner of difference and dispute revealed itself. The unity of confession was soon and forever lost. Altho the church and state in all times, by all manner of compulsion tried to retain the unity of confession, even if it were but in appearance, the process of dividing and separating hath proceeded even unto the present day. There is everywhere discord and controversy amongst Christians. Churches and individuals in the name of Christ and calling upon His Word stand in opposition and enmity to one another. The multiformity of the Christian faith yet increaseth continually. A restoration of unity need no longer be expected in this world.

In this division and separation of Christians lies a great disappointment. We have, have we not, only one God, the Father, out of whom are all things and we unto Him, and only one Lord Jesus Christ, by and thru whom are all things and we thru Him? The Church is one body and one spirit, even as she is called in one hope of her calling, and possesses only one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Jesus, Himself, prayed for the unity of His disciples, that the world might believe that the Father had sent Him. Thus we might also expect that the confession which flows from the lips of the Church should be one.

But even more than this, the existing division and separation is not only a grievous disappointment, it is also a great sin before God. As Christians we cannot humble ourselves enough on account of it. It is a great and weighty accusation against us, because it especially finds its cause in the darkness of our understandings and the uncharitableness of our hearts.

Neither may this division and separation be alleviated by saying, that the confessions, which have gradually come to stand side by side in the Christian Church, are to be considered as different expressions of one and the same truth. For these confessions do not differ only in words and expressions, in language and style, but they often stand in contradiction with each other respecting the matter itself, so that one confirms what the other denies. Election of grace or because of a foreseen faith; justification by faith alone or because of the works of love; the spiritual or corporeal presence of Christ in His supper are not different names for the same fact, but they are interpretations which contradict each other. The diversity of confession must not and may not be confused with the errors, which because of

the darkness of our understandings can creep in. We cannot and we may not therefore be indifferent or neutral with respect to the confessions which have come up and now continue to exist side by side in the Christian Church. We may admire the good intentions of those Christians, who in former or in latter times, have attempted to preserve or even restore this very much desired unity in the Church of Christ, be it either by compulsory or by artificial means.

But nevertheless we must remember and take into consideration that all of these attempts, in spite of the most excellent intentions, have had no other result, than that the truth became falsified, the liberty became suppressed and very often the diversity was increased. For he, who out of impartiality separates himself from all parties, stands in great danger of becoming the head of a new party himself.

Furthermore we must never forget that God also has His hand in history and that He therein executes His wise counsel and judgement. His providence governeth all things, so that nothing takes place by chance, and especially not in the Christian Church of which Christ hath in a specific sense been annointed Head and King by the Father. The ever increasing divisions and separations in Christendom is a fact which cannot take place without God's government—it is accepted and determined in His counsel and with it He no doubt has His own high and wise purposes.

Now, altho because of this we may in no way justify sin which appears and works in this division, nevertheless on the other hand it is not right to overlook the great good which hath been brought about by and thru this diversity. What man has thought evil, God has often meant for good. Out of darkness He can bring

forth light; out of death, life; out of the shame of man honor and glory for His name. So far is God from evil and the Almighty from unrighteousness that He can even suppress and use sin to labor to the glory of His perfections and the establishment of His Kingdom.

As soon as the truth, proclaimed by Christ and His apostles, reflected itself in the human mind it was, most likely immediately, robbed of its purity and became adulterated with all manner of errors; heresy and schism began in the days of the apostles. But thus the truth also became clearer and more and better understood in her fulness and multifariousness and the church was continually led deeper into the mysteries of salvation which God had laid down for her and revealed in His Word.

To be sure, in natural life the children of men are already entirely different the one from the other. Sex and age, talents and character, training and environment, land and people, time and place, rank and station, diversity of gifts, of reason, and heart, bring on the greatest differences in the consideration and interpretation of things. In not one respect are two persons perfectly alike.

And this diversity which exists by nature is not effaced by grace. For grace does not suppress and abolish nature but restores and renews her and yet increases the natural diversity with the diversity of spiritual gifts, which, to be sure, are all worked by the one and the selfsame spirit, but nevertheless, distributed by that spirit severally as He will.

In unity God loveth diversity. The whole creation testifieth thereof, nature with her mountains and valleys, seas and islands; the earth with her kingdoms of minerals and plants, of animals and men; the firmament

with her planets and stars; the heaven of heavens with her thousands and ten thousands of Holy Angels. The great glory of the infinite rich essence of God is reflected in the works of His hands. In the creatures are revealed God's perfections and attributes.

And still clearer and fuller is this diversity revealed unto us in the recreation. There is first of all, Christ the most beautiful of all the children of men, upon whose lips is poured out grace and truth. And then around Him, in great, close, compact masses, the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Apostles and Evangelists, the Martyrs and Reformers, the whole host of the redeemed, who are bought with His blood and renewed by His Spirit. Different are they in Heaven, different were they upon earth. And all that diversity, even thru the sin, guilt and error of man, tends to the good of the knowledge of truth, and to the honor of grace. Christ takes it into service and ornaments His Church with it. The Holy Spirit uses it, to have everyone in his own language declare the great works of God. One day, at the end of time, God will receive all honor and glory of the church out of every tongue and people, kindred and nation.

For this reason it is not a matter of surprise, that in all diversity of confession the different relation is reflected, in which grace is placed to nature. The essence of the Christian religion consists therein, that the creation of the Father, destroyed by sin, is again restored in the death of the Son of God and recreated by the grace of the Holy Spirit to a Kingdom of God. The great question therefore, which always and everywhere returns, is this: In what relation does grace place itself to nature. Practically every child of man must regulate that relation for himself in his thoughts and life, in his

will and actions. And in a larger field it also continually makes its appearance, in church and state, in family and society, in science and education. What is the relation between the creation and recreation, of the kingdoms of the earth and the Kingdom of Heaven, of humanity and Christianity, of that which is from below and that which is from above?

All in accordance with his own personal peculiarity or characteristics every man will designate this relation differently and will also apply it differently in his life. It makes a great difference whether we think of grace as a doctrine or as life; whether we consider it as a supernatural addition to nature or as a remedy against the sickness of sin; whether it is designated for the heart and closet only, or for the whole rich and full life of man; whether it only serves to save the soul or has the tendency to prepare honor for God out of all His works. On account of this difference there arises amongst believers—even amongst members of one and the same church, all manner of smaller and greater differences in the confession. The truth, to be sure, is *one* but it reflects itself in the consciousness of man in very different ways. It is true, only one sun shines in the firmament but everyone sees it with his own eye.

But nevertheless, altho the differences, which exist between the confessions of the Christian Churches, are ever so great, we must not overlook the unity which is revealed in them clearly and plainly; we are so prone to become one-sided. It cannot be denied, that there is difference and controversy upon each and every article of faith. But staring at that which separates believers one from the other, we too easily forget that which unites and holds them together. Often, the harmony is too deeply veiled from our view by the discord which exists.

And yet, this harmony is also present. The believers are all *one*, not absolutely in the spiritual sense, because they are all together ingrafted in Christ and are therefore members of His body; but also in that external sense, that a visible band encircles all Christian Churches and confessions and separates them from all non-Christians.

To be sure the diversity of confession in the Christian Church does not absolutely consist in these and kindred differences, whereby one or another truth is grasped and placed upon the foreground.

It is true, there is no Christendom above discord of faith. The differences between the innumerable Christian Churches and confessions are not mechanically joined to the points of unity or harmony. We cannot separate the first from the last so that there remains a perfect equal sum. Each and every confession is an organism, or, in other words, an organical whole. The Roman is Romish, also in the confession of the twelve articles of faith, which are accepted by all churches. Reformed and Lutherans, Baptists and Armenians are separated from each other not only in the doctrine of election, of the church, of the sacrament, but also in those of God, of Christ, of creation and providence, of redemption and justification.

But there is, nevertheless, a Christendom in the discord of faith, a unity, which, looking at it aright, is much greater and of infinitely more significance than all that which divides and separates the believers from each other. Altho it is not possible to separate that unity from the diversity, nevertheless it is truly and really present in it and also reveals itself clearly and plainly. And altho a written confession very often limits itself especially to the exposition of the differences; in the

unwritten articles, in the prayers, in the fruits of faith, in the works of mercy a striking harmony is to be seen. The imperfect confession of the lips does not very often do justice to the faith of the heart.

Thus it appears to be the will and pleasure of the Lord that the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God shall build itself a way thru the diversity—at the end of time to appear in all its glory. When in the future the body of Christ shall have attained the full growth, and shall have come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; then all the saints together shall fully understand what is the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ which surpasses all understanding, so that they may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

CHAPTER VII.

The Universality of Confession.

Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours: and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. I Cor. 3:21-23.

The diversity of confession does not encroach upon its universality. Altho there are many churches, yet as Christians we altogether confess one, Holy Catholic Church, which makes its appearance in the many and various churches of Christendom, altho it may be very often in a very imperfect way.

Universal, Catholic, is the Christian confession in this sense, that it spreads itself over the whole earth, includes all true believers, is binding for all people and has significance for the whole world. Christianity is a world religion, destined and suitable for every nation and century, for every rank and station, for every place and time. And the most Catholic is that church which has expressed this international and cosmopolitan character of the Christian religion in the purest way in her confession and applied it the most liberally in practice.

This universality or Catholicity of the Christian re-

ligion is directly coherent with the unity of God, which is taught in it. God is one, and therefore His words and works can never contradict each other. All things have their relation and system in His consciousness, in His will, in His counsel. They all exist together in the Son, who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creatures, thru whom and unto whom they are all created. And this Son is at the same time the Christ; the way, the truth and the life, without and outside of whom no one can come to the Father; the only name given under Heaven, that sinners should thereby be saved; the Head of the Church, in whom the Father has made to dwell all the fullness, that He thru Him, having made peace thru the blood of the cross, might reconcile all things unto Himself, be it the things which are upon earth, be it the things, which are in Heaven.

Christianity is therefore the absolute religion, the only, essential, true religion. It tolerates no other religions as of almost equal worth and worthiness alongside of itself. It is, according to its nature, intolerant, even as the truth at all times *is* and *must* be intolerant with respect to the untruth. It will not even be satisfied by being the *first* of the religions, but it claims to be the only, true, full religion, which has absorbed and fulfilled all that is true and good in other religions. Christ is not a man along side of others, but He is the Son of Man, who by the resurrection was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, and received of the Father a name above every name, so that in that name every knee should bow and every tongue confess, that He is the Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.

In this unity is of necessity implied the universality of the Christian religion. While there is but one God,

He is the Creator of all things. Because there is only one Mediator between God and man, He is the Saviour of the whole world. And as there is only one Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, He is the only Guide and Leader in the truth, the exclusive Teacher of the Church, the All-Sufficient Comforter of all believers.

The Holy Scriptures proclaim this universality of Christianity in the clearest and most beautiful way. The Father loved the world and therefore sent His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. In that Son God has reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing unto her her sins. Christ Himself came upon earth, not to condemn the world but to save her. He is the Light, the Life, the Saviour of the world, a reconciliation, not alone for our sins but for the whole world. In Him, all things in Heaven and on earth are reconciled unto God and are also gathered together into one. The world, which was made by the Son, is also destined for the Son as its heir. One day all Kingdoms become our Lord's and His Christ's.

This great and glorious truth has been very often denied and misappreciated. In the course of centuries there have been Christians, and they are still found, who, to be sure, ascribed unto the Gospel a certain importance or significance for the religious-moral life, but who also limited its influence to *that*, and had no conception of its worth and worthiness for the natural life, for family and society and state, for science and art. Yea, many have thought that recreation was in opposition to, in enmity with creation, that grace effaced nature and that therefore, *he* was the best and most Christian who withdrew from the world and shut himself up in solitude.

And advocates of infidelity have eagerly made use

of this and proclaimed triumphantly that Christianity was an enemy of all culture, and therefore in every respect no longer suitable for mankind in the present day. In former centuries it may have fulfilled an excellent calling, and even to-day it may prove to be for this or that melancholy individual, a comfort in his sorrow; but for mankind as a whole, Christianity is antiquated and nigh unto disappearance. Civilization, science, art, commercialism, industry, these are the gods which to-day go before the face of man and lead him out of the house of bondage. But the Gospel of Christ has served its purpose; His Kingdom is not of this world and has nothing to say to this world. Yea, the whole of religion may yet have a little right of existence in the church and closet; but upon the market of life there is no place for it. Religion has nothing to do with politics. In the schools of science, in the temples of art, in the counsel chambers of the State the Almighty is excluded. The liberation or emancipation of the world from God and godly things is prosecuted even to the end.

In this reasoning there lieth a truth, which may not be denied. To be sure, Jesus came upon earth and assumed the natural life, but He assumed it, to deny it and to lay it down again at the cross. He was not married, did not pursue any occupation or profession in civil life, did not hold an office in the State. He was neither a man of science, nor a practitioner of art. His whole life was a sacrifice, which consummated itself in His surrendering unto death. He came to die. Death was the end and purpose of His life. Even as He Himself testified, that He came not to be served, but to serve and to give His soul as a ransom for many.

And *thus*, He *did*, not only for Himself; He de-

mands of His disciples, that they shall follow Him and walk in His steps. Whosoever does not take up the cross, cannot be His disciple. Whosoever desires to save his life, shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose it for His sake, shall find it. Whosoever loves father or mother above Him, is not worthy of Him, but whosoever forsakes *all* for His name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold and inherit eternal life. To enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, the offending eye must be plucked out, and the offending hand and foot cut off, for it is better to enter into life maimed, than to have two hands and two feet and two eyes, and be cast into hell-fire. Nothing may be derogated from this rigid demand of the Gospel of the cross. The Gospel may be *for* man, it is in no single instance *after* man. Whosoever desires to fashion it after the spirit of the age, according to the reasonings of the day, robs it of its power, and experiences nothing but disappointment, if in this way he thinks to find an entrance for it. For, to be sure, Christ has been neither a political leader nor a civil reformer; His Gospel is not suitable to serve as a social program; the Scriptures are not a code of laws neither a handbook for art or science; the administration of the Word is not a preaching of human wisdom; the government of the church is not a domination and not an exercising of authority; the deaconry is not an institution for the solution of the problem of poverty.

For all this Christ did not come; neither for this was His Word given unto us. Christ is Saviour—that is His name and His work; nothing else, nothing more but also nothing less than that. His sacrifice is a reconciliation for sins. His Gospel is a glad tiding unto salvation. His Church is a communion of saints. Christianity is religion, not philosophy.

But *that it is*, then also, wholly and perfectly; the true, pure, full religion, the restoration of the right relation to God and therefore also of that to all creatures. Saviour is Christ, nothing else; but *that* He *is*, then also, so perfectly, that His Gospel is a power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.

And therefore He rejects no one or nothing. The rich who think to have need of nothing, He sends away empty, but the poor He has filled with gifts. Upon the Pharisees who think to have sufficient in their own righteousness, He proclaims His thrice repeated: woe. But publicans and sinners He invites to come unto Him, the sick He heals, the lame He makes to walk, the lepers He cleanses, the blind He makes to see, the dead He raises, over the children He lifts up His hands with blessings, unto the poor He proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and doing good and scattering blessings everywhere He goes thru the whole land.

And in it all He counts nothing strange that is human. Different than John the Baptist, He came eating and drinking, so that He was even branded a glutton and a wine bibber. He was a guest at the wedding in Kana, accepted invitations to dine, forbade His disciples to fast, revealed the joy of the future salvation by the parable of a marriage feast, promised His disciples in the last night of His life, that, altho He would now drink no more of the fruit of the vine with them, yet one day He should drink it anew with them in the Kingdom of the Father.

The ordinances in every rank and station of natural life are recognized and respected by Him, for He has not come to break down the works of the Father, but only those of the devil. He pays the tribute, refuses to act as judge between two brothers quarreling about an

inheritance, commands to give unto Cæsar that which is his, requires submission unto those who are seated upon the seat of Moses, and forbids His disciples, even in the most trying hour, to use the sword. Never does He incite unto resistance; always and ever words of love are heard from His lips. Love your enemies; bless them who curse you; do well unto those who hate you; and pray for those who despitefully use and persecute you.

He also loves nature with a child-like joy. He enjoys her beauty and refreshes Himself in her glory. He has an open eye for the grass of the earth and the lilies of the field, for the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. Vine and fig tree, the mustard seed and the grain of wheat, grape and thorn, fig and thistle, acre and flock, fishing and commerce, are used by Him as symbols and parables in His instruction concerning things Heavenly. The whole of nature speaks unto Him of the Father, Which is in Heaven and Who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. And so very little does He disapprove of all luxury, that He, when Mary once annointed Him with a very choice ointment, does not complain with His disciples of the waste but accepts readily and with gratitude this very precious mark of honor.

And what silences everything—Jesus, to be sure, laid down the natural life for our sakes, but He also again assumed it and is risen from the dead. When He had borne our sins in His flesh on the tree and had thus delivered the natural life from its guilt and curse and death, then He also again accepted it as His possession, but now re-born, spiritualized, sanctified. The corporeal resurrection of Christ from the dead is the decisive

proof, that Christianity does not stand in enmity to anything human or natural but that it only desires to deliver the creation of all things sinful and perfectly sanctify it unto God.

No other is the way in which the disciples of Jesus have to walk. Whosoever wishes to follow Jesus must, to be sure, forsake everything, but he also receives everything in return, thirty and sixty and hundred fold. Whosoever has become one plant with Him in the likeness of His death shall also be this in the likeness of His resurrection. Whosoever suffers with Him, shall also be glorified with Him, and that, not for the first time in Heaven, but already in beginning here upon earth. For whosoever believes has eternal life and is renewed from day to day. From cross to crown, thru death to life—that is the way for both Jesus and His disciples. Therefore everything also returns thru death unto them in the resurrection. Having died and arisen with Christ, they live the remaining portion of their life, in the flesh, in the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved them and hath given Himself for them. Altho crucified unto the world, they are not taken out of the world, but are protected in the world from the evil one by the Father. They remain in the calling, in which they are called. The Jew, who is converted unto the Lord, is not required to take on the foreskin, and the Greek, who comes to faith, is not compelled to be circumcised. The servant remains a servant, altho he comes to liberty in the Lord; and the free-born remains free, altho he becomes a servant of Christ. The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.

All natural ordinances remain; they are not revolutionarily broken down but only recreated by the new

spirit. For the Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy thru the Holy Spirit. Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. Only, have the believers to think on whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure; whatsoever things are lovely; whatsoever things are of good report. As for the rest everything is theirs, for they are Christ's and Christ is God's.

Thus godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Unto him, who has sought the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness, all other things are added. The best Christian is the best citizen. With his confession he neither stands outside of nor in opposition to the natural life. But proudly and bravely he bears it into the world, and plants everywhere the banner of the cross. The Gospel of Christ is a good tiding of great joy for all creatures, for mind and heart, for soul and body, for family and society, for science and art. For it delivers from guilt and redeems from death. It is a power of God unto salvation for everyone that believes.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Obligation to Confession.

For ye are bought with a price:
therefore glorify God in your body
and in your spirit, which are God's.
I Cor. 6:20.

Confessing, to be sure, has its root and origin in the heart, but is nevertheless in itself, according to its nature and character, a thing of the mouth, a work of the lips.

There are many of the opinion, however, that this latter is only incidental to confession, an arbitrary addition, at least, only a superfluous good work. And they know how to ornament this, their opinion, with many beautiful thoughts; in personal faith in Christ and for the salvation of the soul the emphasis is laid upon the heart and not upon the external work of the lips. Silently confessing, and testifying in secret has more worth and worthiness and bears richer fruit, than the speaking of great words and the using of pious terms. Jesus, Himself hath said, not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he, who does the will of My Father, which is in Heaven. Better is it to confess before God in the closet, than to sell the truth in public, and to cast pearls before the swine. The Kingdom of Heaven is not of this world, it comes not in outward form, but is within us.

Man sees what is before the eye, but God considers the heart.

In opposition to the great untruth and lie, which reigns in the confession of the mouth, this reminding of the absolute necessity of the conversion of the heart is perfectly in its place. A fearful hypocrisy has crept into the work of the lips. There is an unjustly-called orthodoxy, which seeks a ground for justification before the face of God in the outward and intellectual acceptance of the truth. Confidence in the merit of outward works of piety is a sin, but no less an evil is confidence in the merit of outward learning and understanding, which in addition makes one to look down in scorn and pride of heart upon the multitude who know not the law, and in the works of mercy and love it is entirely unfruitful. Therefore, in opposition to this false orthodoxy it is always our duty and calling to lay emphasis upon the heart and to exhort unto uprightness before the face of God. For false lips are an abomination unto the Lord, but those who act faithfully are His pleasure. He has no pleasure in a people who draw near unto Him with the mouth, and praise Him with the lips, but whose hearts are held far from Him. The first thing that God requires of each and everyone is the heart, for out of it are the issues of life. To be a Christian consists not therein that we speak great words, but that, with God, we do great things.

But nevertheless this does not in the least take away the fact that Holy Writ attaches a great worth and worthiness to the testimony of the lips and is especially pleased with a confession of the mouth. There is no other book that so fearlessly unmasks all hypocrisy and at the same time values so highly the significance of the word and the power of testimony, as the Word of God.

Speaking is nothing more or nothing less than an essential attribute of God, His eternal, unchangeable work. Speaking, the Father generates eternally out of His own essence the Son, who is the Word, the spoken and at the same time the self-speaking Word, which in the beginning was with God and which was God. Speaking in and thru that Word God brings all things into existence, preserves and rules, recreates and renews them. His speaking is doing, His Word is power, He speaks and it is there, He commands and it stands fast, He calls the things that are not as if they were.

Also in this respect is man created in the image of God. He receives from His Creator not only an understanding and a heart, but also a tongue and a language and is therefore called, not only to think and to feel, but also to speak and to testify. His speaking must be a praising, a proclaiming of the great works of God. Thus the Angels praise Him, when they, standing before the throne, sing the one to the other, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory! Thus the saints praise Him, when they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the Song of the Lamb, saying: Great and wonderful are Thy works, O Lord, Thou Almighty God, just and righteous are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints; who would not fear Thee, Lord, and who would not glorify Thy name? Yea, again and again in Holy Writ, all creatures are called upon to praise the name of the Lord. Bless ye the Lord, all ye, His hosts; ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure. Bless the Lord, all His works in all places of His dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul.

In the midst of all those speaking and praising creatures, man, who hath received the word for the utterance of his thoughts, may not remain silent. Indeed,

he cannot remain silent. His silence is even counted as acknowledgment. Neutrality is as impossible for the mouth as for the heart. Whosoever does not confess Christ, denies Him. Silence soon passes over into doubt, unbelief, enmity. The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell; it is untameable, an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. If we do not bless God, even the Father, with it, then we curse therewith men, which are made after the similitude of God.

Therefore in recreation it is also the purpose of God, that man shall again speak and praise, and proclaim His virtues. God redeems the tongue no less than the heart, the language as well as the thoughts. He makes man free, both soul and body, and also again loosens his tongue and opens his lips. He fills the mouth with laughter and the lips with rejoicing. Thoughts and words also belong together and may not be separated. The Word is the full-grown thought, the thought which has come to liberty and independence. The thoughts in the inward man are as it were the branches, and the words are the blossoms and fruit thereof, which thru the mouth and lips sprout forth and come to maturity. And also of this fruit of the lips, consisting in sacrifices of praise, God is the Creator and Former.

Therefore the Saints of the Old Testament also pray: Lord open my lips, then my mouth shall proclaim Thy praise. Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, with Thy glory all the day. When God sends forth His spirit the prayer of Moses is answered, that all the people may be prophets of God. Then the sons and daughters, the youths and the old men, man serv-

ants and maid servants begin to prophecy and everyone in his own language proclaims the wonderous works of God. Then silence is impossible. The mouth overflows with that of which the heart is filled: Of Thee, O Lord, shall be my praise in a great congregation. I shall praise Thee with all my whole heart. I will sing unto the name of the Lord, the Most High; I will speak of His wonderous works, each one; I will praise Him among the nations; I will praise the Lord at all times; His glory shall continually fill my mouth; I will praise Him forever.

So highly does God value this fruit of the lips, that in opposition to those who scorn and deride Him, the Lord prepares Himself honor out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. If the disciples should keep silent then the stones would cry out. God demands the whole man for His service. He wills that man shall love Him, with mind and heart, with mouth and tongue and all power. And when man on account of sin holds back this love, then it is He Himself, Who, in and thru Christ gathers together out of the whole world a church, which proclaims the virtues of Him Who called her out of darkness unto His marvelous light. It is God, Himself, Who calls His people to this and requires it of them, Who also makes them able and willing. He drives them to it by His Spirit, for this Spirit, leads them in the truth, makes them to confess Jesus as the Lord, witnesseth in them of their childship, and makes them to cry aloud: Abba Father. Because they have been bought with a price, the price of the blood of the Son, they are called to glorify God in their body and spirit which are God's.

This obligation or duty of confessing the Lord's name rests upon each and every believer. In the con-

fession of our mouth it appears whether we mean it, if it is holy earnestness with us, if the love of God is dearer unto us than the friendship of the world. It is, the evidence of the truth, the verification of the faith, the crown upon the work of God within us. In the confession, returns unto God, by way of the lips, what He Himself out of grace, thru His Spirit, hath wrought of faith and love in our hearts. It is not a hard duty, not a severe command, but a service of love which never vexes, a blessed privilege, a high honor. For a child of man there is not a more glorious work than to be allowed to confess God and to proclaim His honor.

Such a privilege is confessing for the individual believer and that is it also for the church as a whole. She believes, therefore she speaks. Thruout all centuries she confesses. To friend and enemy she gives an account of the hope that is in her. Her testimony is as the voice of many waters. She reveals her faith, in her meetings and religious services, in her prayers and hymns, in her works of mercy and gifts of love. Always and everywhere she confesses. She is and cannot be otherwise—than a confessing church.

In speaking of the confession of the church, it is very unilateral to think exclusively or even in the first place of the written expression of her faith. To be sure, this gradually became necessary for the church because of errors and heresies. And when the church appears in the midst of the world with this, her written confession, she also maketh a glorious profession of her faith.

Entirely without ground, the Church of Christ, has, from different sides, been denied the right of expressing her faith in writing and of being watchful for its perfect maintenance. For, with such a written confession she

does not encroach upon the word of God but only explains the contents of that word according to the measure of faith and knowledge granted unto her in a given time. With it she does not assail the authority of the Scriptures, but just tries to maintain this, and with it she is upon her guard that the Scriptures be not abandoned to the arbitrary will of the individual. She does not bind the consciences with it, but delivers these from the ever-recurring errors of man and strives to lead all thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. With it she does not cut off development but tries to retain this and to lead it in the right path, in the path of building up and not breaking down. The confession of the church does not stand alongside of, much less above, but deeply below Holy Writ. This is and remains the only, perfect, sufficient rule of faith and life.

Even if a church should never express her faith in print, still she would always, as long and in so far as she is a church, have a confession. But when she expresses her faith in writing, then she obtains thereby this profit, that the truth, in so far as she hath acknowledged it, is handed down unaltered from generation to generation and is also easier to be maintained against all adversaries. Unto the confession of the church belongs a great pedagogical worth and worthiness. The individual coming to maturity grows into this confession and after awhile accepts it freely and independently as his own. Even as a child in every sphere goes in unto the work of his ancestors so he also lives from year to year into the spiritual inheritance of his fathers.

No one begins at the beginning. Everyone stands upon the shoulders of those who were before him. Everyone of us lives and spends of the treasures which

parents and grandparents brought together for us. Only, unto each and everyone of us comes the requirement that, with the exertion of all our powers we shall master and make our own that which we have inherited of the fathers. Thus a child also accepts the confession of the church, so that this may afterwards become the free and independent expression of its personal faith.

But also on account of this, however high the written confession may stand, it may never be severed from personal faith, neither may it ever be torn out of its coherence with the testimonies and deeds wherewith the church distinguishes herself *from* and places *herself* in opposition *to* the world. It is not a document which binds us because of its honored antiquity. It bears no authority that is laid upon us by the remote past. But it is, even as all other acts, borne and animated from moment to moment by the faith of the church and thus proceeds from generation to generation. It is even in the present day, still our confession, not because it was compiled by our fathers and by them delivered unto us, but because it is for *us* to-day, even as it was for them in former centuries, the purest expression of our faith, the clearest explanation of the truth of God, the most beautiful exhibition of the treasures of salvation, which are granted unto us by God in Christ.

Trained from our youth in the confession of the church, we now confess therein our own faith.

CHAPTER IX.

The Opposition to Confession.

But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. Galations 1:11.

Confessing is contrary to flesh and blood, contrary to world and satan.

By nature, every man is in enmity with the proclamation that Jesus is the Christ. To the superficial thinker or observer it may seem strange that the Gospel has at all times met with so great an opposition. It is, is it not a good tiding of great joy unto all creatures? It speaks of nothing but grace and peace and salvation; it demands nothing and gives everything. And nevertheless it finds resistance and opposition everywhere; for the Jews it is an offense and to the Greeks foolishness. It may be *for* man, but it is not *after* man. It is not, as it would be, if man had planned and reasoned it out; it is of divine origin and therefore is not in conformity with the thoughts and desires, with the lusts and the passions of man. Mind and heart, desire and will, soul and body resist the Gospel of Christ. And in that resistance man is externally strengthened by the whole world, by the whole kingdom of darkness.

Certainly there is a difference in the circumstances. In days of peace and rest the opposition to the Gospel

is much less earnest than in times when the church is oppressed and persecuted by the world. Much more courage is necessary to stand up for Christ in a godless community of sinners and scoffers than in a circle of relatives and friends who altogether confess the truth. A stronger faith is necessary not to be ashamed of the Cross of Christ in a company of nobles and learned men than in the midst of a common and simple people in some isolated town or village.

But in principle the opposition is everywhere the same. For flesh and world and satan are always and everywhere the same, and the greatest and strongest enemy, who resists the Gospel of Christ dwells in our own heart. The forms in which the enmity reveals itself may be different but always and everywhere the confessing of the Lord's name is accompanied with a denying of ourselves, and a bearing of the cross. Scorn and derision become the part and portion of everyone, in whatever circle, who breaks with the world and follows Jesus.

Even when faith has been worked in the heart and has driven to confession, how much is there, even then, that continually and constantly keeps the lips closed and holds us back from a free and happy acknowledgment of Jesus' name.

Behold it in a Peter, who, in the hour of danger denies His Master and even afterwards in Antioch, out of fear for the brothers of circumcision makes himself guilty of hypocrisy. And nevertheless Peter was the most prominent of the Apostles, who for his glorious and free confession of Jesus' Messiaship, received the name of Rock and who felt himself bound with such a strong love to His Saviour that he would enter death with Him, and cast far from him the possibility of de-

nying the Lord. If he could fall and did fall, who then can remain standing? And for whom is the warning superfluous that he, who thinketh to stand, take heed lest he fall?

The history of the Christian Church reveals unto us many beautiful examples of steadfast, unshakable martyrdoms, but it also contains the sad stories of thousands upon thousands of those who in the hour of temptation denied the faith or in crooked ways drew back from the confession. When persecution or tribulation ariseth because of the Word, then is immediately offended he, who at first heard the Word and received it with joy, but had no root in himself and dureth only for a while.

There are so many dangers to which a believer stands exposed; so many cliffs upon which he is threatened to strand. Lust of the eyes, lusts of the flesh and pride of life; fear for loss of name and honor, of possessions and life, exert themselves alternately, singly or unitedly to draw the disciple of Jesus from the steadfastness of his faith. And under all these trials and temptations, the so-called false shame probably exerts the greatest power. For even when the tribulations and persecutions are passed, this works on and makes thousands and ten thousands to stumble and fall. In low and high society, amongst the rich and the poor, in the midst of plebians and patricians this false shame throws her great hindrances in the way of the confession of the Lord's Name.

There is something deeply humiliating in the fact that in the ground of our heart we are ashamed of Jesus. For He was a man, who went thru the country doing good and blessing; who was gentle and tender of heart; and who, it is true, died on a cross, but His enemies were His judges and therefore condemned Him to this

shameful death, altho He was entirely and perfectly innocent. There must be something wrong with us, we must be morally sick, if we are ashamed of such a man and dare not take His name upon our lips.

Shame in general is an unpleasant feeling, which comes upon us at a certain action or state of ourselves which lowers us in the estimation of others. Sometimes is good. For instance, when Adam is ashamed of himself after transgressing God's commandment, he shows by it, that he feels his action to have been evil and that he realizes his fall. Shame is not always and absolutely a fruit of faith, but it is also found with the natural man and thus proves that man thru sin has not become an animal or devil but that he has still remained man, and that he has still retained a feeling of his honor and worthiness.

Nevertheless, alongside of this true and good there also exists a wrong, a false shame. It is found with us when we feel timid or embarassed about something which in itself is good, but which nevertheless makes us descend in the estimation of others. Thus we are often ashamed of the good impressions which the proclamation of the Gospel has had upon us; of the accusations of our conscience; of the sorrow which comes up in us after committing an evil and wicked act; of the tender-heartedness and affectiveness with which we are effected under certain circumstances. We are afraid, that others, noticing this will scorn and deride us on account of it; that they will consider us weak, simple, childish; that we will lose by it our name as strong, brave, courageous persons.

Now this false shame also falls upon us with respect to the Gospel of the cross. We are ashamed of the church which consists not of many wise and mighty

and noble. We are ashamed of the Bible, which is so strange and wonderful, and which is rejected and disputed by the men of civilization and science. We are ashamed of Christ, who claimed to be the only begotten Son of God, the annointed of the Father. We are ashamed of His cross, which was an offense to the Jews and foolishness unto the Greeks. We are ashamedof the whole special revelation of God, which reveals us unto ourselves and displays us in our spiritual poverty.

And we make ourselves fearful that we, choosing the side of Christ will lose entirely our name and our honor as man, with ourselves and others and will become an object of scorn and derision, of abuse and persecution. We fear, that by the confessing of Christ, our dignity, personality, humanity will be injured and suffer loss. Even the false shame has therefore for its basis a dark consciousness that we were once created in the image of God and have still a certain rank and honor to preserve. The respect and admiration of himself and of others is in short a matter of indifference to no one, because in his deepest fall he remains man and continues to bear the name of man, that is, of God's image and likeness.

But this consciousness, under the influence of sin, works now in the reverse direction. For it is true, by giving ourselves entirely unto Christ for salvation, we descend in our own estimation and in that of others, and with man we lose our name and our honor. But this estimation rests upon a fancy and that fancy and that honor is built upon an imagination. For by nature we consider ourselves rich and enriched and in need of nothing. But when we embrace the Gospel, then we learn to realize that we are poor and blind and naked and in need of everything.

And thus also our honor with man is mostly the fruit of ignorance and appearance. The art of winning the hearts and praise of man consists therein that we conceal our real, true nature and allow them to form an opinion of our person according to our external learned appearance. God is true and honest, but every man is a liar; he does not always speak the untruth but he is untruth; he is false, deceitful in his existence itself. Reality and appearance, essence and revelation, inward and outward man are in contradiction with each other. Sometimes while the mouth overflows with love, and the countenance reveals nothing but friendship, then out of the heart of man comes forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. The saint, knowing man in his inward existence and looking into the innermost depth of his heart, would flee from him in horror. And therefore, incomparably great has been the love of Christ, who knew what was in man, and yet came, sought him, and gave himself into death for him.

Thus we really live for ourselves and for others in a fancy and imagination. When we look at it in the right light, we lose nothing essential when we believe in Christ for we have nothing essential. We only lose the imagination, that we live, that we are rich, and enriched and in need of nothing. The most fearful misery of sin consists not yet therein, that we are blind, but it consists in this: that we, being blind, nevertheless imagine that we see. Sin is guilt and pollution and shame, but above that, also foolishness and ignorance.

And that imagination of ours is brought into confusion by the Word of the Lord. We must deny that imagination if we desire to be saved by Christ. For, to become a Christian—that means, to count our own

opinion and that of others as of no worth and worthiness; to accept the judgment of God concerning us and hope only upon His grace and mercy. The confessing of Christ includes, that we lose ourselves and everything, our name and our honor, our possessions and our blood, our soul and our life. And it is exactly against this that the false shame strives and struggles. The sigh for self-preservation, in appearance, forces and drives man, with the exertion of all his strength and power, to oppose the Gospel.

The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God. And neither does he understand that losing ourselves is the only way to true self-preservation.

CHAPTER X.

The Strength for Confession.

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.
I Cor. 12:3.

What is impossible with man, is however, possible with God. From Him is all our ability. All true confessing comes forth out of the faith of the heart, which is a gift of God, a fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Altho Christ had fulfilled everything, still would it have been fruitless, if, after His ascension to Heaven, He had not sent the Holy Spirit, who leadeth in all truth. For the whole world of itself stands in opposition to Christ and loves darkness rather than light. But the Holy Spirit has come to witness of Christ in the midst of the world. He is the only but also the almighty witness of Christ. All scorn Christ but the Holy Spirit glorifies Him. All condemn Christ but the Holy Spirit justifies Him. All reject Christ but the Holy Spirit stands up for Him and pleads His cause at the consciences of men. All call Christ accursed, but the Holy Spirit says that He is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

He witnesseth of Christ in the Word, which thru prophets and apostles He hath written. He witnesseth of Christ in the world, which He convinceth of sin and righteousness and judgment. He witnesseth of Christ in the church who acknowledgeth Him to be her Lord and her God. He witnesseth of Christ in the heart of every believer, who thereby knoweth that he is a child of God and cries "Abba Father." And against that testimony of the Holy Spirit, in short, no child of man can stand. As soon as the Holy Spirit accompanies the proclamation of the Word of God with His Almighty power, then, the hardest heart is broken, the most stubborn knee is bowed; the loudest mouth is stopped. In the face of His testimony all our thoughts and considerations are of no significance, they burst as a bubble of soap. No one speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, and everyone that hath received that Spirit confesses Him as his Lord and Saviour.

But even then, when faith has been implanted in the heart, in the face of the various temptations to unfaithfulness, the working of the Spirit, which makes faith to reveal itself in word and deed, always remains necessary. For it is God who worketh in us not only *to will* but also *to do* His good pleasure. From Him we receive both the power of faith and the boldness to confess.

Therefore David prayed that God might not take his Holy Spirit from him, and might strengthen him with a free and bold spirit. When Peter and John once stood before the great counsel, and afterwards, being released, told the brethren their experiences, they all together lifted up their voices to God saying: Now Lord look upon the threatenings of the adversaries and give unto Thy servants to speak Thy Word with all

boldness; and when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness. Even a Paul requested the prayers of the church that utterance might be given unto him, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel.

For the minister of the Word in the first place, but then also for every believer this boldness to speak and testify is indispensable. It consists in the unembarrassment to give testimony to the truth of God in Christ, in a firm, trusting faith, openly and freely before each and everyone. It is founded in the blessed assurance of the remission of guilt, in the liberty to approach the throne of grace and to ask everything of Him in prayer. And it is strengthened in us by the many examples of brave and unshakable confessors of whom both Holy Writ and history make mention.

There is, first of all, the example of Christ. He was in Himself the Word, the Truth, the Perfect Revelation of God. And He came into a world lying in sin and in bondage unto deceit. His appearance alone, with nothing more, was a protest that was bound to awaken the hatred and enmity of the world. She could not tolerate Jesus. His existence was her judgment. And therefore she strained every muscle to banish this righteous one from the earth. But Jesus remained faithful unto His Father and became obedient unto Him, even unto the death of the cross. He withstood every temptation. He bore all enmity, before the Jewish Sanhedrin He verified His divine Sonship, and before Pontius Pilate He made the good confession. Thus He revealed Himself to be the true and faithful witness, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, who has

left us an example that we should walk in His steps.

Then furthermore there are the many thousands of angels unto whose communion the believers have come in Christ Jesus. They also exhort us to perseverance in the fight. For they accompanied Christ upon all His ways, and ascended and descended upon the Son of Man all the days of His earthly sojourn. They follow the church upon her way thru the world and are sent out in the service of them who shall inherit salvation. They are desirous of looking into the mysteries of salvation and rejoice over every sinner who repents. Because of their perfect obedience, they are given unto us for examples in the very perfect prayer and thru us they must be made acquainted with the multifarious wisdom of God.

Then again we have the great cloud of witnesses, with whom we are encompassed about, the whole church triumphant, whose numbers, altho they do not behold our battles as eye witnesses, nevertheless by their example as witnesses of the faith encourage us and exhort us to imitate them. They have, for a part at least, tasted of scourging and derision, and also of bonds and imprisonment. But they were not ashamed of the good confession and remained faithful unto the end. And daily their number is being increased. A multitude which no man can number is now already formed by the spirits of the perfect righteous, who have been taken into Heaven, and are become our leaders and examples in the faithful confession of Christ.

And finally there is also the church militant upon earth, which, by holding fast to the unshakable confession of hope, strengthens us. In very truth, it hath been said, that every Christian should believe so firmly that, altho all others should fall away, he would still

remain standing firm and unshakable. But notwithstanding this is true, in general, man is not set aside *for*, neither able to endure such a seclusion. To be sure, God is able to grant such a strong faith that we, tho forsaken by all yet proceed upon our way with rejoicing. But generally God keeps us standing in and thru the communion of saints. For even as we in one body have many members, and these members have not all the same work, so also are we many, one body in Christ, but we are each others members. And as such all believers have commuuion with the Lord Jesus and all of His treasures and gifts, and each one must feel that he is obliged to use, willingly and gladly his talents and gifts for the benefit and to the salvation of the other members.

Thus the confessors of Christ are hardly ever alone. Sometimes in a certain place and at a given time they may feel themselves forsaken and alone. But also then it is very often revealed that there are yet thousands who, with them, have not bowed the knee to Baal. And when they arise out of the anguish of their souls and look about, over the whole world and thruout the ages, they realize that they are members of a communion, which from the beginning to the end of the world is gathered, in unity of faith, out of the whole human race, by the Son of God and by Him likewise protected and preserved. The Church of Christ is the kernel of humanity, the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Whosoever is a living member of her counts among his brothers and sisters, the best and greatest and noblest of our generation; prophets and apostles and church fathers and martyrs and reformers. And at their head stands the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, the Sovereign of the Kings of the earth.

Especially in our fatherland (The Netherlands) there is no reason whatever why we should despondently withdraw and lock ourselves up into obscurity. For, Christians are no where and never a sect; altho they are opposed and contradicted everywhere, but they are this the least in the Netherlands, whose national existence was born or brought forth by the Reformation. The Christian character is, in this land, genuinely national, and the confessors of the Reformed Faith are not strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens and members of the household, children of those fathers who, with their possessions and blood, fought victoriously for truth and liberty against error and the binding of their consciences.

When we remember all these things, what examples ought we not then to be in faithful confessing and holy walk! To be sure, the power of faith is necessary to row up against the stream and to bear that all men speak evil of us, altho it is deceitfully and for the Gospel's sake. From the multitude there proceeds a magical influence upon the individual. In every circle the danger is so great that we submit to the number and adjust ourselves to the majority.

But in opposition to this, the believers can derive encouragement for themselves from the thought, that they all together are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to the Mediator of the new covenant.

Therefore then, we have nothing to fear, for they who are with us, are more than they which are with them.

CHAPTER XI.

The Reward of Confession.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. Matt. 10:32.

Unto the faithful confession of the Lord's name is bound a reward, which is great in the Heavens.

Continually Holy Writ speaks of a reward which shall be granted unto believers at the return of Christ. It is granted as an indemnity, for that of which the disciples of Jesus here upon earth denied themselves for His sake, or for what they suffered, or for the good works of mercy and love which they fulfilled. And Holy Writ does not hesitate to encourage believers unto a faithful perseverence in their confession by the promise of such a reward. She is not afraid that she thereby shall introduce a false principle into the practice of godliness, that she shall give cause or reason to exercise virtue to serve fortune and God for the sake of the Heavenly salvation.

For altho constantly speaking of a reward Holy Writ is very strongly opposed to all service for reward. The reward that awaiteth the faithful soldiers, is not obligatory, is not a right which is theirs by nature, is not an obligated remuneration for accomplished labor. Such

a reward is not known to scripture and she cuts it off in the root by the relation in which she places man as creature to God his Creator. Whosoever has done everything that was commanded him is yet but an unprofitable servant. Man is, and has of himself nothing and therefore can give nothing unto God upon whom he is absolutely dependent. He can give nothing because he has to receive everything. He is not a party opposite to God, who, has his own, inalienable rights, and in the form of a contract can demand reward or wages for the labor to be delivered.

But God, from His side, has of His own free will bound Himself to richly crown all, who walk in His ways, with the gifts of His grace. Unto that He bound Himself in the first covenant, when in the obedience unto His commandment He opened the way to eternal life and heavenly salvation. This was not a reward in the sense of a reward for work performed, for what equality does there exist between the very easy and in itself obligated keeping of the Lord's commandment and the unobligated gift of eternal, blessed life in communion with God ?

And just so in the covenant of grace He binds Himself to give unto everyone that believes in Christ, eternal life. But here there is still less room to speak of a reward in the original sense of the word. For believing is nothing else than accepting the gift of grace which hath been revealed in Christ, and is therefore no more meritorious than the grasping of the life line by a shipwrecked mariner who is upon the verge of perishing and sinking in the deep. But God is so good that He attaches unto faith, not for His own, but for Christ's sake, the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting, and by the glory which awaiteth believers He encourages them in

the fight. Thus it is, then that both are true, on the one hand the possession of all the benefits of the covenant is placed before all works and bound only to faith, and on the other hand the believer is so earnestly exhorted to the doing of good works, as if all of these benefits were only to be obtained in this way. The believers are chosen from eternity and yet they have to make their calling and election sure. Thru faith they possess eternal life and yet, one day they shall receive it out of the hand of the Father as a reward for their self-denial. They are branches of the vine, who without Christ can do nothing and yet, they are exhorted to abide, in Him, in His Word, in His love. They are the handiwork of God created in Christ Jesus unto all good works, which God hath prepared, and still they must walk in the same. They are holy, and nevertheless must sanctify themselves from day to day. They have crucified their flesh with its lusts and yet they are called to mortify their members which are upon earth. They are sure of their ultimate salvation for God's election is immutable, His calling irregretable, His covenant immovable, His promises yea and amen, and yet they are constantly urged to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, to be faithful unto death and to persevere unto the end.

Holy Writ does not encourage a passive but an active Christianity. It desires that, the believers shall constantly and continually become more what they are; that they shall merit what they have inherited; that they shall more and more, make themselves possessors of what in Christ belongs to them. Therefore the same thing—that on the one hand is an unmerited free gift, can on the other hand be represented as a reward. It can be called a reward because faith and perseverance

in faith is the only way, in which believers can perfectly come into possession of those benefits which in Christ are given unto them out of pure grace. Without holiness no one shall see God.

By that reward we sometimes understand the heavenly salvation itself and then again the different steps or grades in glory which shall be granted unto the believers according to their works. Even as it is upon earth so shall it be in heaven. There is diversity in unity. Another is the glory of the sun, and another is the glory of the moon, and another is the glory of the stars; for the one star differeth in glory from the other star. In the house of the Father, wherein dwell all the children of God, there are many mansions. According to the measure of their faithfulness each church receiveth of the King of the church an own ornament and crown. For we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in His body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Then the separation between man and man will be perfected. At the first coming of Christ, yea, already at His very first announcement in the promise; this crisis, this judgment in the world began. Christ came unto the resurrection and the fall of many. He came not to bring peace upon the earth but the sword, to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. He compels all, to choose for or against Him. His Word is a judge of the thoughts and meditations of the heart. His Gospel is a savour of life unto life or a savour of death unto death. And that separation is perfected by Him in the day of His future, when everything shall be revealed before His judgment seat.

For the Father hath given all judgment unto the Son because He is the Son of Man.

Everyone's fate shall then be determined by the fact, whether or not Christ acknowledges him to be His and confesses him before His Father, which is in Heaven. Upon His public confession hangs our acquittal, our salvation.

Christ was not ashamed of us at His incarnation. To be sure He had many reasons to be. For He, Himself, was the only begotten of the Father, of one essence and glory with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, yea, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person—who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. And we were laden with guilt, unclean from the crown of our heads to the soles of our feet, and subject to corruption. But still He was not ashamed to call us brothers. He was ashamed of us neither before God nor before the Holy Angels. He accepted our flesh and blood, went in unto our nature, became like unto us in everything, sin only accepted. And even God was not ashamed to be called our God in Christ.

Therefore then He shall also not be ashamed of us in the day of His future. To be sure, at that time He comes again not as servant but as Lord, not to suffer but to be glorified, not unto a cross but with a crown. But nevertheless He shall not be ashamed of us. For He that ascended up far above all Heavens, is the same, that once descended into the lower parts of the earth. He that judges, is the Son of Man, Who once came to seek and to save that which was lost. Our judge is our Saviour. He never forgets and never forsakes those that are His. Whosoever confesses Me before men, thus He witnesseth, him will I also confess before My Father which is in Heaven.

Publicly, in full view of the whole world, so that every creature shall hear it, He will stand up for His faithful confessors. However despised they may have been in this world, Christ will take their name upon His lips and proclaim it unto every ear that they are His, whom He hath bought with His own blood, and of whom no power in the world or in hell shall be able to rob Him.

And as Christ says so shall it be. His judgment shall be affectual in the whole creation. His confession shall concern all creatures. No one shall be able to criticise it. No one shall dare to oppose it. His judgment shall be exalted above all criticism and shall stand high above the judgement of all men and devils. The heavens and the earth and the hell and all creatures shall eternally submit to it.

And what is of greater importance than all this. The Father shall rest in this work of His Son. Even as God after the creation saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good, even so at the end of days He shall look down with divine pleasure upon the great work of redemption brought about by Christ. When the church without spot or wrinkle shall be set before Him, and the Kingdom perfected shall have been given unto Him, then the Father shall accept all the redeemed of the Son as His children, make them to participate in His communion and enjoy His presence.

The public confession of the believers by Christ before His Father, which is in Heaven, shall be the surety of their eternal salvation and glory.

CHAPTER XII.

The Triumph of Confession.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Phil. 2:9-11.

Deep in the heart of man lies buried the hope that truth shall one day gain the victory over untruth, and that good shall one day triumph over evil.

All religions foster that expectation and speak of a triumph that shall be gained at the end of time by the Kingdom of Light over that of darkness. All systems of philosophy conclude by picturing an ideal state, wherein man, surrounded by the pure atmosphere and clear sunshine of the future, shall dwell in peace and joy, true, free, and good. All men long for a paradise, in which innocence shall have returned and prosperity shall be the portion of all. Even the greatest unbelievers surrender themselves to this sweet hope, and dream of a kingdom of truth and goodness and beauty, that shall after a shorter or longer period of time come upon the whole earth.

But alas! for that hope all ground is lacking. For upon what ground can we believe in a triumph of truth, of righteousness, if there is no God of truth and righteousness and no Christ, annointed of the Father, to raise that kingdom and to create the new heavens and the new earth? The idols of the heathen are the works of the hand of man; the future expectations of philosophers are the inventions of the human brain; and the truth, the good, and the beautiful are pleasant sounds but no powers which in themselves are able to usurp authority over all the children of men.

Whosoever expects salvation from that, sees himself compelled to build upon man and to expect of them that they shall slowly and gradually acknowledge the truth and exercise virtue. But by that it also appears immediately that that hope is very weak. For, to be sure, there is progress in material prosperity, a developing of man's authority or power over nature, an ever-increasing servitude of nature's powers to the making agreeable of life.

But, according to all acknowledgment, the moral progress does not keep step with the material progress. In our century, which looks down from on high upon all her predecessors, justice is trampled under foot, righteousness stumbleth upon the streets, coveteousness and thirst for gold increaseth, the glorification of power knows no bounds. Civilization, knowledge, and science even become subservient to brutal force. On the one hand, there is an insatiableness of culture, on the other, misery and lamentation. And man appears to be farther away from paradise than ever before.

At all events it is clearly proven by history that no salvation is to be expected, either from the exertion of human strength and power, or from the imminent self-

development of the world. If there is nothing else, there remains only room for dim despondency and hopeless despair. Whosoever is without God and without Christ, is also without hope in the world. The Kingdom of Heaven was not at one time established upon earth along the lines of succession, neither shall it be completed in the future in this way.

It is again in the spiritual realm even as in that of the natural. Even as the earth must receive her light and her air, her rain and her sunshine, her growth and her fruitfulness from above, so also is mankind dependent for its spiritual life upon the world of invisible and eternal things, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God.

From on high therefore is descended He, who is the Light, the Life, the Salvation of the world. And from on high He gathers, preserves and protects the Church, which is His body. For He hath been exalted as Head at the Father's right hand, that He should fulfill all things with Himself, and as King must He reign until all enemies have been brought under His foot.

And thus He shall one day descend from above. His second coming is understood in the first and in her time necessarily flows forth out of it. His second coming is not an arbitrary addition to, but is inseparably united to His first appearance. For the work of Christ consists in saving; not in the opening of the possibility of salvation, but in the granting of salvation itself, perfectly and eternal.

His work was therefore not finished with the meriting of salvation upon earth. Of what profit and benefit to us would be a Christ, who would only die for us but would not live and pray for us and for our good appear before God's countenance? But He that de-

scended is the same also that ascended far above all Heavens, that He should fulfill all things. What He merited, He also applies. What He began, He consummates. He does not rest and may not rest, until He has perfectly saved His people, and renewed Heaven and earth.

Maranatha! the Lord cometh. He comes again, first of all for His own sake. His name, His office, His honor is at stake. He comes again, to reveal it unto the whole world, that He is the true, the perfect Saviour; that He saves not in name but in deed and in truth; that He grants eternal life unto all, who have been given unto Him by the Father; that no one has plucked or is able to pluck them out of His hand; that He is the same yesterday to-day and forever.

He comes again, to take vengeance with a flaming fire upon all those who do not know God and who are disobedient unto His Gospel; but also to be glorified in all His saints, and to be admired in all, that believe; to to be acknowledged and homaged as the Lord, the only and true Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The history of the world therefore ends in unity of confession. One day, angels and devils, the righteous and the godless shall agree in the acknowledgment, that Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father and therefore the Heir of all things. Then every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess, that Jesus Christ is the Lord.

To-day that confession can be contradicted and opposed. For she has as contents a world of invisible things. To have an insight into her truth, it is necessary to have faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. We walk by faith and not by sight. The world, that reck-

oneth only with things visible, can contradict the Church, consider her faith foolishness, and look upon her hope as an illusion. Even the appearance is against us. For from the days, that the fathers died, all things remain the same, even as from the beginning of creation, so that the mockers can ask: Where is the promise of his future?

But a change is coming, Maran-atha! John saw, in a vision, Heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him, was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and upon His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in Heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

When Christ appears thus in glory, no one shall be able to oppose or withstand Him. All shall see Him, also they that pierced Him. They shall see Him with their own, corporeal eyes, and no unbelief, no doubt shall any more be possible. Then all creatures shall have to acknowledge that Christ is the Lord. They shall have to acknowledge it, if not freely, then compelled; if not willingly, then unwillingly; if not with, then against their desire. Even from the Throne in the midst of the Heavens, thruout all the realms of creation, to the very depth of the great abyss, only one voice

shall be heard to sound and resound: Christ the Lord! And all creatures together shall bow the knee before Him, who, to be sure, was deeply humiliated and died on a cross, but who was also highly exalted and seated upon the Throne of the Universe at the Father's right hand.

What a future, what a scene! The whole creation upon its knees before Jesus! And upon all lips the one, the brief, the returning to her point of obeisance but nevertheless all including, the now by many scorned but then by all acknowledged confession, that Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father!

Come, Lord Jesus, yea come quickly!

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. And He, that hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, shall in no wise blot out his name out of the book of life, and He shall confess his name before the Father and before His Angels.

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